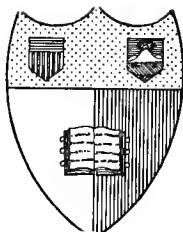




ZADOC PINE
AND OTHER STORIES
BY H. C. BUNNER

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gives by
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THE ZADOC PINE LABOR UNION.

WHEN Zadoc Pine's father died, Zadoc found himself alone in the North Woods, three miles from Silsbee's Station, twenty-one years old, six foot one inch high, in perfect health, with a good appetite. He had gone to school one summer; he could read and write fairly well, and could cipher very well. He had gone through the history of the United States, and he had a hazy idea of geography. When his father's estate was settled up, and all debts paid, Zadoc owned two silver dollars, the clothes he stood in, one extra flannel shirt, done up in a bandanna handkerchief in company with a razor, a comb, a tooth-brush, and two collars. Besides these things he had a six-inch clasp-knife and an old-fashioned muzzle-loading percussion-cap rifle.

✓ Old man Pine had been a good Adirondack guide in his time; but for the last six years he had been laid up, a helpless cripple, with inflammatory rheumatism. He and his son—old

Pine's wife had died before the boy was ten years old—lived in their little house in the woods. The father had some small savings, and the son could earn a little as a sort of auxiliary guide. He got a job here and there where some party needed an extra man. Zadoc was an excellent shot ; but he was no fisherman, and he had little knowledge of the streams and ponds further in the woods.

So, when the old father was gone, when Zadoc had paid the last cent of his debt to the storekeeper at Silsbee's—the storekeeper taking the almost worthless shanty of the Pines in part payment—when he had settled with Silsbee's saw-mill for the boards out of which he himself had made his father's coffin, Zadoc Pine stood on the station-platform and wondered what was going to become of him, or, rather, as he put it, "what he was a-going for to do with himself."

There was no employment for him at Silsbee's Station. (He might, perhaps, get a job as guide ; but it was doubtful, and he had seen too much of the life. It seemed to him a waste of energy. To live as his father had lived, a life of toil and exposure, a dreary existence of hard work and small profit, and to end at last penniless and in debt for food, was no part of Zadoc's plans. He knew from the maps in the old geography that the whole Ad-

irondack region was only a tiny patch on the map of the United States. Somewhere outside there he was sure he would find a place for himself.)

He knew that the little northern railroad at his feet connected with the greater roads to the south. But the great towns of the State were only so many names to him. His eyes were not turned toward New York. He had "guided" for parties of New York men, and he had learned enough to make himself sure that New York was too large for him. "I wouldn't be no more good down there," he said to himself, "then they be up here. 'Tain't my size."

Yet) somewhere he must go. He had watched the young men who employed him, and he had made up his mind to two things: First, these young men had money; second, he could get it if they could. One had jokingly shown him a hundred-dollar bill, and had asked him to change it. There was some part of the world, then, where people could be free and easy with hundred-dollar bills. Why was not that the place for him? "They know a lot more'n I do," he said; "but they hed to l'arn it fust-off; an' I guess ef their brains was so everlastin' much better'n mine they wouldn't souse 'em with whiskey the way they do."

As Zadoc Pine stood on the platform, feeling

of the two silver dollars in his pocket, he saw the wagon drive up from Silsbee's saw-mill with a load of timber, and old Mr. Silsbee on top of the load. There was a train of flat cars on the siding, where it had been lying for an hour, waiting for the up-train. When the wagon arrived, Mr. Silsbee, the station-master, and the engineer of the train had a three-cornered colloquy of a noisy sort. The station-master after awhile withdrew, shrugging his shoulders with the air of a man who declines to engage further in a profitless discussion.

"What's the matter?" asked Zadoc.

"That there lumber of Silsbee's," said the station-master, who was a New England man. "The durned old cantankerous cuss is kickin' because he can't ship it. Why, this here train's so short o' hands they can't hardly run it ez 'tis, let alone loadin' lumber."

"Where's it goin' to?" inquired Zadoc, "an' why's this train short o' hands?"

"Goin' to South Ridge, Noo Jersey," said the station-master, "or 'twould be ef 'twan't for this blame strike. Can't get nobody to load it."

"Where's South Ridge?" was Zadoc's next inquiry.

"'Bout ten or twenty miles from Noo York."

"Country?"

"Country 'nough, I guess. Ask Silsbee."

Zadoc walked after Mr. Silsbee, who was by this time marching back towards the saw-mill, red in the face and puffing hard. Zadoc got in front of him.

"Mornin', Mr. Silsbee," he said.

"Mornin'—er—who are ye? Oh, Enoch Pine's boy, hey? Mornin', young man—I hain't got no time——"

"How much is it wuth to you to get them sticks to where they're goin' to?" demanded Zadoc.

"Wuth? It's wuth hundreds of dollars to me, young man—it's wuth——"

"Is it wuth a five-dollar bill?" Zadoc interrupted.

"Whatyermean?"

"You know me, Squire Silsbee. If it's wuth a five-dollar bill to get them timbers down to South Ridge, New Jersey, an' you can get that engineer to take me on as an extra hand that far, I'll load 'em on, go down there with 'em, an' unload 'em. All I want's five dollars for my keep while I'm a-goin'."

"You don't want t' go to South Ridge?" gasped Mr. Silsbee.

"Yaas, I do."

"Whut fer?"

"Fer my health," said Zadoc. The squire

looked at the muscular, sunburnt animal before him, and he had to grin.

"Well," he said, "'tain't none o' *my* business. You come along, an' I'll see if that pig-headed fool will let you work your way down."

One hour later Zadoc was rolling southward on a flat car, and learning how to work brakes as he went. It was a wonderful pleasure-trip to him. The work was nothing; he was strong as a bull-moose; and he was simply enchanted to see the great world stringing itself out along the line of the railroad track. He had never in his life seen a settlement larger than Silsbee's, and when the villages turned into towns and the towns into cities, he was so much interested that he lost his appetite. He asked the train hands all the questions he could think of, and acquired some information, although they did not care to talk about much except the great strike and the probable action of the unions.

* * * * * *

It was about six o'clock of a cloudy May evening when Zadoc Pine jumped off the car at South Ridge and helped to unload Mr. Silsbee's cargo of timber. The brakeman on his end of the train said, "So long!" Zadoc said, "So long!" and the train whirled on to New York.

Zadoc stood by the track and gazed somewhat dismally after his travelling home. He was roused from something like a brown study when the station-master of South Ridge hailed him.

“Hi, country! where are you?”

“Is this New Jersey?” asked Zadoc.

“Yes. What do you think it was—Ohio?”

Zadoc had heard something of the national reputation of the State from his late companions.

“Well,” he reflected, “I must be pretty mildewed when a Jerseyman hollers ‘country’ at me.”

Zadoc made this reflection aloud. The station-master walked off with a growl, and two or three gentlemen who were talking on the platform laughed quietly. Zadoc walked up to one of them.

“I brung that there lumber down here,” he said; “I’d like to know who owns it. Maybe there’s more job in it fer me?”

“I don’t think so,” one of the gentlemen said, in a rather cold and distant way. “That is for the new station, and the railway company has its own hands.”

Zadoc looked all about him. There was no town to be seen. He was among the foot-hills of the Orange Mountains, and on all sides of

him were undulating slopes, some open, some wooded. He saw old-fashioned farm-houses, and many more modern dwellings, of what seemed to him great size and beauty, although they were only ordinary suburban cottages of the better sort. But nowhere could he see shops or factories. There was a quarry high up on one of the slopes, but that was all. It looked like a poor place in which to seek for work.

"Well," he remarked, "maybe there's somewhere where I can put up fer to-night."

"What sort of place?" the gentleman asked.

"Well," said Zadoc, "some sort of inn, or tavern, or suthin', where I c'n get about ten cents' wuth o' style an' ninety cents' wuth o' sleep an' feed."

Two of the gentlemen laughed; but the one to whom Zadoc had spoken, who seemed a dignified and haughty person, answered in a chilly and discouraging way:

"Go down this street to the cross-roads, and ask for Bryan's. That is where the quarrymen board."

He turned away, and went in the other direction with his companions. Zadoc Pine shouldered his rifle, picked up the handkerchief which held his other belongings, and trudged down the road under the new foliage

of the great chestnuts. He came in a little while to the cross-roads, where there were four huddled blocks of shabby square houses. There was a butcher's shop, a grocer's, a baker's, three or four drinking-places, and Bryan's. This was the forlornest house of all. There was a dirty attempt at an ice-cream saloon in the front, and in the rear was a large room with a long table, where the quarrymen took their meals. When Zadoc arrived, the quarrymen were sitting on the sidewalk in front of the house with their feet in the gutter. They were smoking pipes and talking in a dull way among themselves. By the time that Zadoc had bargained for a room, with supper and breakfast, for one dollar, supper was announced, and they all came in. Zadoc did not like either his companions or his supper.

He did not know enough of the distinguishing marks of various nationalities to guess at the nativity of these men; but he knew that they were not Americans. He tried to talk to the man nearest him, but the man did not want to talk. Zadoc asked him about the work and the wages at the quarry.

"It's a dollar-twenty-five a day," the quarryman said, sullenly; "an' it's a shame! The union ain't doin' nothin' fer us. An' there ain't no more quarrymen wanted. There's

Milliken, he owns the carrts ; mebbe he'll take a driver. But if ye want a job, ye'll have to see McCuskey, the diligate."

"What might a diligate be?" inquired the young man from the North Woods.

"The mon what runs the union. Ye're a union mon, ain't ye?"

"Guess not," said Zadoc.

"Thin ye'd best be out of this," the man said, rising rudely and lumbering off.

"Guess I won't wake McCuskey up in the mornin'," Zadoc thought; "dollar-'n'-a-quarter's big money; but I don't want no sech work ez quarryin', ef it makes a dead log of a man like that."

He finished his meal and went into the street. Bryan was leaning against the door-jamb, conversing with a tall man on the sidewalk. It was the gentleman whom Zadoc had seen at the station.

"You can't get him this week, Mr. Thorn-dyke," said Bryan. "Bixby's ahead of you, and the Baxters. They been waitin' three weeks for him. Fact is, Andy don't want to do no more th'n two days' work in a week."

"Can't you think of any other man?" Mr. Thorndyke queried, irritably. "Here I have been waiting for this fellow a whole fortnight to dig a half-dozen beds in my garden, and I

don't believe he intends to come. There ought to be somebody who wants the job. Can't some of these men here come after hours, or before, and do it? I pay well enough for the work."

There was no movement among the quarrymen, who were once more sitting on the edge of the sidewalk, with their feet in the gutter.

"I don't know of no one, Mr. Thorndyke," said Bryan, and Mr. Thorndyke turned back up the road.

"Diggin' garden-beds?" mused Zadoc. "I ain't never dug no garden-beds; but I hev dug fer bait, 'n' I guess the principle's the same—on'y you don't hev to sort out the wums." He walked rapidly after Mr. Thorndyke, and overtook him.

"Don't you want me to dig them beds fer you?" he inquired.

"*Can* you dig them?" Mr. Thorndyke looked surprised and suspicious.

"That's what I'm here fer."

"Do you know where my house is? The third on the hill?"

"Third she is," said Zadoc.

"Come up to-morrow morning."

Zadoc went back to Bryan's and went to bed in a narrow, close room, overlooking an ill-kept back yard. It was dirty, it was cheerless;

worst of all, it was airless. Zadoc's mind was made up. "Ef this suits quarrymen, quarryin' don't suit me."

* * * * *

He had a bad night, and arose at five the next morning. At six he went to a breakfast that was worse than the supper had been. Zadoc had been used to poor and coarse fare all his life, but there was something about this flabby, flavorless, greasy, boarding-house food that went against him. He ate what he could, and then walked up the road toward Mr. Thorn-dyke's house. As he went higher up the hill he saw that the houses at the cross-roads were very much unlike their surroundings. To a man born and brought up in the skirts of the North Woods, this New Jersey village seemed a very paradise. The green lawns amazed him; the neat fences, the broad roads, the great trees, standing clear of underbrush, were all marvels in his eyes. And besides the comfortable farm-houses and the mansions of the rich and great, he saw many humbler dwellings of a neat and well-ordered sort. From one of these a pretty girl, standing in the doorway, with her right arm in a sling, looked at him with curiosity, and what Zadoc took to be kindly interest. It was really admiration. If Zadoc had ever thought to inquire, he would

have learned that he was not only big, but good-looking.

He lingered a little as he passed this place, to admire it. The house had two stories, of which the lower was of rough stone, brightly whitewashed. In front was a bit of a garden, in which green things were sprouting. In the little woodshed, to one side, a neat old woman, with pretty, white hair, was cutting kindling-wood. The girl in the doorway was very pretty, if her arm *was* in a sling. Zadoc looked it all over with entire approval. "That's *my* size," he thought.

He found no one awake at Mr. Thorndyke's house, and he sat on the front steps until half-past seven o'clock, when Mr. Thorndyke himself came out to get the morning paper, which had been left on the front porch. Zadoc had read it through already.

"You are early," was Mr. Thorndyke's greeting.

"I was earlier when I come," returned Zadoc. "Been here more'n an hour. Awful waste o' God's sunlight, when there's work a-waitin'."

"Well," said Mr. Thorndyke coldly, as he led the way around the corner of the house, "here are the beds. The lines are pegged out. I suppose there is about a day's work on them,

and I will pay you at the usual rate for gardeners' work, hereabouts—a dollar and a half."

"Yaas," said Zadoc, as he looked over the territory staked out, "I see. But if this job's wuth a dollar-'n'-a-half to you, I'd ruther take it *ez* a job, at them figgers. I *can* fool away a day on it, ef that'll please you better; but I'd ruther git through with it when I git through, ef it's all the same to you."

"I don't care how you do it," Mr. Thorndyke said, "so long as it is done, and done properly, when I come home to-night at six."

"You needn't put off coming home for me," was Zadoc's cheerful assurance.

Then he proceeded to ask Mr. Thorndyke a number of questions about the manner in which the beds were to be dug. Mr. Thorndyke knit his brows.

"Haven't you ever dug beds before?"

"I never dug no beds fer *you*. When I do work fer a man I do it to suit him, an' not to suit some other feller."

"How do I know that you can do the work at all?"

"You don't," said Zadoc, frankly; "but ef 'tain't satisfactory you don't hev to pay. *That's* cheap fer a hole in the ground."

"Have you a spade?" Mr. Thorndyke demanded, and his manner was depressingly stern.

"No, I ain't," said Zadoc, "but I'll git one."

* * * * *

Zadoc walked up to the next house on the hill, which was a large and imposing structure. It belonged to the richest man in South Ridge, and the richest man was sitting on his front porch.

"Got a spade to lend?" Zadoc asked.

"What do you want it for?" the richest man demanded.

"Fer a job down there to Squire Thorndyke's, next door," Zadoc informed him.

"Did Mr. Thorndyke send you?"

"No, I come myself."

The millionaire of South Ridge stared at Zadoc for a moment, and then arose, walked around the house, and presently reappeared with a spade. "When you bring this back," he said, "give it to the man in the stable."

"Much obliged!" said Zadoc.

The beds were all dug before three o'clock, and Mrs. Thorndyke came out and expressed her approval. Zadoc took off his hat and bowed, as his father had told him he should do when he met a lady.

"I see," he remarked, "you've got some mornin'-glories set out alongside o' the house. Ef you'll get me a ladder an' some string, an' nails an' a hammer, I'll train 'em up fer yer."

Mrs. Thorndyke looked doubtful.

"I don't know what arrangement my husband has made with you," she began; but Zadoc interrupted her.

"There ain't nothin' to pay fer that, ma'am. One pertater on top 'f the measure don't break no one, and it kinder holds trade."

The ladder and the other things were brought out, and Zadoc climbed up and fastened the strings as he had seen them arranged for the morning-glories that climbed up the walls of Squire Silsbee's house.

While he was on the ladder, the rich man next door, whose name, by the way, was Vredenburg, came down and leaned on the fence and talked to Mrs. Thorndyke.

"Getting the place in good trim, aren't you?"

"Trying to," said Mrs. Thorndyke. "There are ever so many things to do. I've sent to three men already, to cart my ash-heap away, and they won't come. There's a wandering gardener here who has just dug my beds; if it hadn't been for him, I should have gone without flowers all the summer."

Zadoc heard this and grinned; and then he began to think. He had been looking over toward the quarry during the day, and he had noticed that the horses stood idle a large part

of the time. There was one tall gray hitched to a cart, whose business it was to remove the small stones and waste, and who did not make one trip an hour, resting for the greater part of the time under a huge tree.

"That horse ain't too tired," thought Zadoc, "to give a feller a lift after workin' hours."

By four o'clock the strings were up for the morning-glories. Mr. Thorndyke would not return before six. Zadoc strolled down to the quarry and found Milliken. He asked Milliken what would be a proper charge for the services of the big gray horse for two hours after six o'clock. Milliken thought fifty cents would pay him and the horse. Then Zadoc continued his stroll, and found out that the dumping-grounds of South Ridge were near the river, among the tailings of an abandoned quarry.

After that he went back to Bryan's and got a couple of eggs cooked for his private supper. He had had his dinner at the noon hour, and it was worse than the breakfast. The eggs were, as he told Mr. Bryan, "kinder 'twixt grass and hay." He felt that he had had enough of Bryan's.

Going up the road to Mr. Thorndyke's, he came to the neat little house that he had noticed the night before; he looked at it for

a minute, and then he went in and asked the white-haired old woman if she did not want to take him as a boarder. She said that she did not; she was a lone widow-woman, and she had all she could do to pay her way with doing washing, and she didn't want no quarrymen fooling around her house; she knew what quarrymen were.

Zadoc explained to her that he was not a quarryman. He told her all about himself, and about his dissatisfaction with Bryan's arrangements; but she only shook her head and said that she didn't want him. He was going out of the door, when the young girl who had smiled on him yesterday, and who had been listening in a corner, came forward and spoke earnestly to the old woman.

"He *looks* good, mother," Zadoc heard her say; "and it's to his credit that he don't like Bryan's. If he's a decent man, we oughtn't to send him back to a place like that. It's a shame for a young man to be left among those people."

The old woman wavered. "We might try him," she said.

Zadoc came back.

"You try me, and you'll keep me," said he. "An' ez fer you, young woman, ef you use ez much judgment when you pick out a husband

ez you do when you choose a boarder, you'll do first-rate." The young woman blushed.

Then they talked about the proper price of Zadoc's board, and they all agreed that two dollars a week would be fair. Zadoc paid down the two dollars in advance, and was without a cent in the world, for Bryan had taken his other dollar for the two bad meals. But Zadoc did not mind that, and within fifteen minutes he had moved his possessions into a clean little whitewashed room in the second story of the widow Dadd's house. The widow was much troubled at the sight of his rifle; but she finally consented to let it hang on his white wall; and Zadoc ate his supper, although he had eaten one already, and made the meal as cheerful as he could to Mrs. Dadd and her daughter, which was not difficult to him, for it was a good supper. A little before six he marched off to Mr. Thorndyke's.

Mr. Thorndyke paid him his dollar and a half; and Zadoc broached a new project.

"There's that there ash-heap o' yours," he said, "why can't I cart that off fer you?"

"But you haven't a cart," Mr. Thorndyke objected.

"I'll have one," Zadoc said. "What's the job wuth?"

"I've always paid a dollar."

Zadoc rubbed his chin and mused. "I'll call on ye for thet dollar when I've earned it," he said. "Evenin'!"

Zadoc had been at the back of the house during the day, and had sized up the ash-heap, as well as one or two other things. He walked down to the quarry and got the big gray and his cart, and drove up to the Thorndykes' back yard. There he shovelled the ash-heap (the shovel went with the horse and cart) into the vehicle. There was just one load. There had been a heavy rain during the night, and the ashes were packed close. The cart held a cubic yard, and it was not overloaded when Zadoc drove it down the road toward the old quarry.

As he drove he looked ahead, and he noticed that the sidewalks, or raised paths to right and left of the road, were made of ashes pounded down—not cinders from the railroad, but ordinary hard-coal ashes, beaten into a compact mass. Before he had driven half a mile he saw, some hundred feet in front of him, a broad break in the sidewalk to his right—a gully washed out by the rain. He stopped his horse behind a clump of trees, alighted, and walked forward to the gate in front of a comfortable house. The owner was pottering about, looking at the vines that were begin-

ning to climb up the wires on his veranda. Zadoc accosted him.

"Evenin'! You've got a bad hole in that there path o' yourn."

"Are you a road-inspector?" asked the man of the house, in a disagreeable tone of voice.

"No," said Zadoc, "I'm a road-mender. You've got ter fill that hole up. S'pose I fill it up fer you fer fifty cents?"

"Yer ain't going to drive out here and mend that walk for half a dollar, are you?" the man asked, incredulously.

"I'm a-goin' to take it on my reggleler rowt," replied Zadoc. "Does she go?"

The man looked over the fence at the big hole. "She goes," he said.

It was just one hour later, when some light lingered in the sky, that the householder with the broken sidewalk paid Zadoc Pine his fifty cents. He paid it with a dazed look on his face; but Zadoc was as bright and airy as usual as he pocketed the money and drove back to the quarry-stables. His cubic yard of ashes had filled the gap and left a little over, with which he had patched a few smaller breaks.

When Zadoc arose on the morrow and stepped out of doors to breathe the morning

air, he saw the white-haired widow chopping kindling-wood in the shed.

"That ain't no work fer you," he said.

"Who's to do it?" the widow asked; "my darter, her arm's lame. She lamed it snatchin' a child off the railroad-track in front of the engyne. The engyne hit her. It was one o' them delegate's children, an' no thanks to nobody. Who's to chop kindlin' if I don't?"

"I be, I reckon," said Zadoc. He took the hatchet out of her hands and split up a week's supply. It was sharp work on an empty stomach; but he took it out of the breakfast, a little later.

After breakfast he walked down to Centre, the nearest large town, and spent an hour in a paint-shop there. He asked a great many questions, and the men in the shop had a good deal of fun with him. Zadoc knew it, but he did not care. "Amooses them, don't hurt me, an' keeps the derved fools talkin'," he said to himself.

He returned to South Ridge in time for dinner, and in the afternoon sallied out to look for a job. Remembering the Bixbys and the Baxters, and the fact that "Andy" did not care for more than two days' work in the week, Zadoc thought he would offer his services to the two families. "Thar' ain't no room in this

world," he reflected, "for two-day men. The six-day men has first call on all jobs."

The Bixbys gave him the work, and paid him a dollar for the afternoon's work; but he could not come to terms with the Baxters. They wanted him to take fifty cents for half a day's work.

"But you'd 'a' had ter pay that there other feller a dollar," Zadoc objected.

"But that's different," said Mrs. Baxter; "you aren't a regular gardener, you know."

"The job ain't different," replied Zadoc; "and ef Andy c'n get a dollar fer it, I'm a-goin' to let him have it." And he shook his long legs down the road.

He loomed up, long and bony, before Mr. Thorndyke just after dinner.

"You've come to cart the ash-heap away, I suppose?" Mr. Thorndyke said.

"That ash-heap moved out of town last evenin'. Ef you've got time, though, I want yer to step around to the back o' the house. Got somethin' to show yer."

The "something" was Mr. Thorndyke's barn. He kept no horse; but the small building that goes with every well-regulated cottage in New Jersey he utilized as a play-room for his children and a gymnasium for himself.

"That there barn," Zadoc told him, "is jest

a sight to look at. It stands to the north o' the house, an' takes all the weather there is. The paint's most off it. Look at these here big scales! I took one of those there fer a sample, and here's the color, the way it ought to be, on this here bit o' shingle." Zadoc pulled the sample out of his pocket. "Now you want'er let me *paint* that barn for yer. I've figgered thet it'll cost yer jest twenty-five dollars. Thet's a savin' for *you*, an' I c'n take my time about it, and put in a week on the job an' do some other work round the town at the same time."

"Have you other engagements?" Mr. Thorndyke asked.

"No," was Zadoc's answer; "but I'm goin' to hev 'em."

"But do you know how to paint?"

"Anythin' the matter with my gardenin'?"

"No."

"All right on ash-heaps, ain't I?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, you jest try me on paint. Same old terms—no satisfaction, no pay. I can't make that there barn look wuss'n it does now; an' I'm goin' ter make it look a heap better."

The next afternoon Zadoc was painting the Thorndyke barn. He worked there only in the afternoons; in the mornings he hunted up

odd jobs about the town, and the money he got for these he took to Centre and invested in paint and brushes. As he paid cash, he had to buy in small quantities; but when the barn was painted—and it was painted to Mr. Thorndyke's satisfaction—Zadoc found himself something more like a capitalist than he had ever been in his life.

But there was one unpleasant incident connected with this job. He was sitting one afternoon in the children's swing, which he had borrowed to use in painting those parts of the barn which he could not reach with a ladder: he tied the ends of the ropes around the cupola, twisted himself up to the ridge-pole, and untwisted himself as he painted downward. He was slathering away on his second coat, whistling cheerily to himself, when a man in overalls and a painty jacket came up and made some remarks about the weather. Zadoc told him that the weather was a good thing to take as it came; and then the man inquired:

"Do you belong to the union?"

"What union?" asked Zadoc; "I ain't no Canuck, ef thet's what yer mean."

"The house-painters' union," said the man.

"Well, no," said Zadoc, still slathering away, with his head on one side. "Guess I'm

union enough, all by myself. I'm perfec'ly united, I am—all harmonious and unanimous an' comfortable."

"What are you a-paintin' for, then?" demanded the stranger.

"Fer money," said Zadoc. "What are you a-foolin' around here for?"

"Have you ever served an apprenticeship to this business?" the man asked.

"Hev you ever served an apprenticeship ter rollin' off a log?" Zadoc asked, by way of answer.

The man muttered something and moved away. Zadoc communed with himself.

"Ap-prenticeship ter sloppin' paint! Well, I be derved! Why, fool-work like thet's born in a man, same's swimmin'."

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As Zadoc became known to the community he found that work came right to his hand. The laboring native of South Ridge was the sort of man who said, when a job was offered to him, "Well, I guess I'll take a day off some time week arter next and 'tend to it." This energetic person from the North Woods, who made engagements and kept them, was a revelation to the householders of the town. He mended fences and roads; he cut grass and sodded lawns; he put in panes of glass and

whitewashed kitchens; he soldered leaky refrigerators and clothes-boilers; he made paths and dug beds; he beat carpets and pumped water into garret tanks—in short, he did everything that a man can do with muscle and intelligent application. He was not afraid to do a thing because he had never done it before.

Moreover, he made his services acceptable by doing, as a rule, more than his contract called for. He was not above treating his employers as so many fellow human beings. When the doctor prescribed wild-cherry cordial for Mrs. Thorndyke, Zadoc put in a whole afternoon in scouring the country for wild cherries, and brought back a large basketful. He would take no pay.

"Them's with my compliments," he said. "They growed wild, an' I guess they growed wild a-puppus. Knowed thar was sick folks a-needin' of 'em, mebbe."

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But it was not to be all plain sailing for Zadoc. One evening he went home to the widow Dadd's, and found the widow in tears and her daughter flushed and indignant. They told him that a "boycott" had been declared against him for doing union men's work, and against them for harboring him. The butcher of the town, who was also the green-grocer,

would sell Mrs. Dadd nothing more until she turned Zadoc out of doors. Centre was the nearest town from which she could get supplies, and Centre was three miles away.

Zadoc walked over to the butcher's shop. The butcher was a German.

"What's this here, Schmitzer?" he demanded. "Ain't my money good enough fer you?"

"I ken't help it, Mr. Pine," said Schmitzer, sullenly. "If I don' boygott you, dem fellis boygott me. I got noddin' against you, Mr. Pine, but I ken't sell you no mead, nor Mrs. Tatt neider."

"Runnin' me out of town, are ye?" Zadoc said. "Well, we run men out whar I come from. But we don't run 'em out unless they've *done* suthin', an' they don't let 'emselves be run out onless they've done suthin.' I ain't done nothin' but what I ought, an' I'm a-goin' ter stay here."

He went back to the widow Dadd's, and told her that he would take charge of the commissariat. That night he got a large packing-case, which Mr. Vredenburg was quite willing to give him, and a barrow-load of saw-dust from the waste-heap at the saw-mill. After an hour's work he had a fairly good ice-box, and by the next night he had that box filled with ice from Centre and with meat and vegetables from New

York. Zadoc read the papers; he had seen the market reports, and now he was able to determine, by actual experiment, the difference between South Ridge prices and New York market prices. He discovered that the difference was very nearly forty per cent. The express company's charge for transportation was forty cents for an ordinary flour-barrel well packed.

Zadoc saw a new vista opening before him. He called on Mr. Thorndyke, and proposed to do that stately person's marketing, and to divide the forty per cent. profit evenly between them. Mr. Thorndyke was at first doubtful and suspicious. He cross-examined Zadoc, and found out what had started the young man on this new line. Then his manners changed. Mr. Thorndyke was not in the habit of carrying himself very graciously toward those whom he considered his social inferiors. But now he grasped Zadoc's hand and shook it heartily.

"I'm glad to know this, Pine," he said. "If you've got the pluck to fight those cowardly brutes and their boycott, I'll stand by you. You may try your hand at the marketing, and if you suit Mrs. Thorndyke, all right. If you don't, we'll find something else for you to do."

Zadoc went in town on the morrow with a list of Mrs. Thorndyke's domestic needs. He had, on his previous visit, sought out the venders who dealt in only one quality of goods, and that the best. To these, in his ignorance of the details of marketing, he thought it best to apply, although their higher prices diminished his profits. In this way he was able to send home a full week's supply of the best meat and vegetables in the market. They proved to be better than Schmitzer's best, and Mr. Thorndyke paid a bill smaller by one-fifth than he had ever received from Schmitzer. Zadoc was only forty-three cents to the good; but he had made his point. Within one month he was buying for ten families, and receiving the blessing of ten weary housewives, who found it easier to sit down of a Friday night, lay out a bill of fare for a week, and hand it to Zadoc Pine with a tranquil dismissal of all further care, than it had been to meet every recurring morning the old, old question, What shall we have for dinner to-day? And Zadoc found his profit therein.

* * * * *

One warm evening in September, Zadoc Pine sat in the front yard of the widow Dadd's house, whittling a plug for the cider-barrel. He looked up from his whittling and

saw a party of a dozen men come up the road and stop at the gate. He arose and went forward to meet them.

"Good-evenin', friends!" he said, driving his jack-knife into the top rail of the fence and leaning over the pickets: "Want to see me, I s'pose? What c'n I do fer ye?"

One man came forward and put himself at the head of the party. Zadoc knew him by sight. It was McCuskey, the "walking-delegate."

"You can get out of this town," said McCuskey, "as fast as you know how to. We'll give you ten hours."

"That's friendly-like," said Zadoc. "I ain't had a present o' ten hours' free time made me since I wuz a boy at school."

"Well," McCuskey broke in, annoyed at some suppressed laughter in his rear, "you can take them ten hours and use them to get out of South Ridge."

"Ken, eh?" said Zadoc. "Well, now, ef I've gotter go, I've gotter go. I ain't got no objection. But I jest wanter know *what* I've gotter go fer. Then maybe I'll see if I'll go or not."

"You have got to go," McCuskey began, "because you have interfered with the inalienable rights of labor; because you have taken

the bread out of the mouths of honest toilers——”

“Sho!” Zadoc interrupted him, “don’t talk no sech fool-talk ez that! I ain’t taken no bread outer no man’s mouth. I ain’t got down to that yet. S’pose you tell me in plain English what I’ve done to be run outer town fer?”

There was more hushed laughter in the spokesman’s rear, and he set his teeth angrily before he opened his lips again.

“You have no trade, and you have taken jobs away from men who have trades. You took away a painter’s job when you painted that barn on the hill.”

“I didn’t take away no painter’s job. It wasn’t nobody’s job—it wasn’t no job at all until I made a job of it. Ef the painter wanted it, why didn’t he go an’ get it?”

“You’ve took away Andy Conner’s garden-ing-work all around the town.”

“Tha’s so!” from Andy Conner, at the back of the crowd.

“Where was Andy Conner when I took his jobs away from him?” Zadoc asked, and answered himself: “Drunk, in Bryan’s back yard. Andy Conner works two days in the week, an’ I work six. I ain’t got no time to be sortin’ out Andy Conner’s jobs from mine.”

Then there came a husky howl from out the thickest of the crowd.

"Vell, you take away my chob, aynyhow! You take my bissness away—you take my boocher bissness."

"Ah!" said Zadoc, "that's you, Schmitzer, is it? Yes, ye're right. I'm takin' yer job away—the best I know how. But I didn't take it away until you took the food outer my mouth—thet's what ye did, an' no fancy talk, neither—an' outer the mouths o' two helpless wimmin. An' under them circumstances, every time, I'd take your job away, ef you was the President of the United States."

This was a solemn asseveration for Zadoc. He respected the office of the President of the United States. But it was lost on his hearers. No man in that crowd respected the President of the United States. There came a low, growling murmur from the group:

"Kill him! Hang the scab! Kill him!"

"Kill?"

Zadoc let out a voice that only the Adirondack hills had heard before. Then he checked himself, and talked quietly, yet so that every man on the street heard him.

"I came from the North Woods," he said. "They make *men* whar I came from. I ain't wronged no man in this town. I come here to

make my livin', an' here I'll stay. Ef you wanter fight, I'll fight yer, one at a time, or the hull gang! Ye can kill me, but ye've gotter kill me *here*. An' ef it comes ter killin', I c'n hold my end up. I c'n kill a rabbit at forty rod, an' I own my rifle yit. But I know ye won't give me no fair fight; ye want to crawl up behind me. Well, I'm a man from the woods. I c'n hear ye a half a mile off, an' I c'n *smell* ye a hundred yards."

He made an end, and stood looking at them. He had picked up his big jack-knife, and was jabbing its blade deep into the top rail of the fence and picking it out again. A silence fell upon the crowd. Zadoc Pine was a large man and a strong man. He had a knife, and in the doorway behind him stood the widow Dadd's daughter with his rifle, held ready for him.

Zadoc broke the silence.

"Boys," he said, "I ain't no hog. I want you to understand that I'm goin' to earn my own livin' my own way. I take what work I c'n get; an' ef other folks is shif'less enough ter leave their work fer me ter do, thet's *their* business. I've took one man's job away from him fer cause. But I ain't got no spite ag'in him. He's on'y a fool-furriner. Thet's you, Schmitzer. An' ter show you that I ain't got

no spite agin yer, I'm a-goin' ter make you an offer. I'll take yer inter partnership."

There was a derisory laugh at this from the whole delegation, but Zadoc checked it.

"Schmitzer," he said, "you come inside here and talk it over with me. I ain't goin' to hurt ye, an' yer friends here 'll go down street ter Bryan's an' take a drink. They've been a-talkin', an' I guess they're thirsty."

After a moment of irresolute hesitation the delegation moved off. The men were puzzled. The exiling of Zadoc Pine seemed no longer a simple matter, and they felt the need of discussing a new situation. Zadoc and Schmitzer were left together in the little stone house.

"Schmitzer," said Zadoc, "I'm makin' most as much clean profit outer my ten families ez you're makin' out of yer whole business, an' I don't have no rent t' pay. Here's my figgers—look 'em over. Now, Schmitzer, thar's no end of business hereabouts thet you ain't worked up. These farmers all around about are livin' on salt pork, an' eatin' butchers' meat wunst a week. We've gotter get their trade and teach 'em Christian livin'. These here quarrymen ain't eatin' meat like they oughter. S'pose we show 'em what they c'n get for a dollar?"

Schmitzer looked carefully over Zadoc's figures. He knew the risks of carrying perish-

able stock. He saw that people bought more when the opportunities of the great markets were offered to them. Before he left the house he had agreed to work with Zadoc, and to follow his leader in the new scheme for supplying South Ridge with meat and vegetables.

"An' what'll yer friends down street say?" queried Zadoc.

"I don' care vot dey say," responded Schmitzer; "dose fellus ain't no good. I got better bissness now. If dey don' like it, dey go down to Cendre un' bring deir meat home demselves."

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Zadoc retains his share in the Pine & Schmitzer Supply Company; but after he had drummed up the local trade on the new basis, and broken Schmitzer into the routine work, he branched off for himself in a new line.

He had found an amateur electrician among his customers, and with this gentleman's aid he organized the South Ridge Fire Department and Protective Association. Thirty-six householders paid him ten dollars for the plant and ten dollars for yearly service; and he connected their houses in an electric circuit, of which his own bedroom was the central station. In each house was a combined bell and alarm; and if a citizen awoke at night to find his chimney on fire or to hear a stranger within

his chicken-house, he rang a wild tocsin in thirty-five other houses, and then sounded a signal-letter by dot and dash to proclaim his identity. Then the whole town turned out, and Zadoc drove a small chemical engine behind Schmitzer's horse. If the cause of the disturbance was a chicken-thief, and the cause was caught, Zadoc played upon him.

"Can't bring out that engyne fer nothin'," he said; "she's gotter serve a moral purpose somehow."

Two years and a half have passed since Zadoc left the North Woods. He is an employer now, and an owner of real-estate, in a small way, and he still has South Ridge under his protecting wing, and keeps her yards clean and her lawns trim—or his men do. Moreover, he is the husband of the girl whose smile first welcomed him to the Ridge.

"Man must earn his bread in the sweat of his brow," he has said; "but some men sweat inside o' their heads an' some outside. I'm workin' my brain. I could 'a' done more with it ef I'd 'a' had edication. When that there boy o' mine gets a few years on top o' the six weeks he's got now, I'll give him all he wants, an' he c'n do the swaller-tail business ef he wants to. Thet goes with edication."

"You have done much for the town, Mr.

Pine," the Dominie once said to him, "and I am glad to say that your success has been due to the application of sound principles—those principles on which true success has ever been founded."

"Yaas," said Zadoc, meditatively, "an' then—I'm an Amerikin, an' I guess thet goes fer suthin'."

NATURAL SELECTION.

A ROMANCE OF CHELSEA VILLAGE AND EAST
HAMPTON TOWN.

PART I.

CHELSEA Village has never had the aggressive exclusiveness of Greenwich. It exists to-day, and vaguely knows itself by name, close to the heart of the great city that has swallowed it up ; but it is in nowise such a distinct entity as the brave little tangle of crooked streets a few blocks to the south. Greenwich has always been Greenwich, and the Ninth Ward has been the centre of civilization to the dwellers therein. But Chelsea has tried to be fashionable, has opened its doors to foreign invaders, and has even had an attack of Anglomania, and branched out into Terraces in the true London style. And so it has lost homogeneity and originality, and it has only a peculiar and private air of ambitionless and uninviting gloom to set it apart as a special

quarter of New York. But Chelsea certainly does look like the inhabitants of its own boarding-houses—most respectable people, who have only tried too hard at elegant gentility for their own comfort or prosperity. And the place has one other strong individuality. I do not know that there are very many ailanthus-trees in Chelsea; but there is, to me, a pervading odor of that gruesome exotic in all the streets, and I think an imaginative person might detect the smell even in the midwinter blasts that howl up from the North River.

Contemplation of one Chelsea street had a depressing effect upon Miss Celia Leete, as she sat by her window at five o'clock of a summer Saturday afternoon. Her room was in the front of a third story of a comfortable white wooden house, one of a little squad that stood well back from the street, the first two stories all but hidden by green-latticed verandas.

Miss Celia Leete looked through the thin and dusty leaves of the horse-chestnut-tree on the sidewalk, and her gaze roved idly up and down the line of boarding-houses across the way. They were boarding-houses with certain aspirations. They had also high stoops and elaborate cast-iron balconies. Yet, somehow, they did not look like even the second-cousins

of those lordlier structures within the sacred one block's space east and west from Fifth Avenue. Perhaps this was partly because right next to them came the little tailor's shop, red brick, painted redder yet, ten feet wide and one story high, with the German tailor's wife forever standing in the doorway, holding her latest baby in her bare red arms.

The children of shabby and not over-clean gentility were playing in shrill-voiced chorus on the sidewalk in front of the high-stoop houses. Occasionally one of them would recognize a home-returning father, and, without pausing in the merry round of Spanish Fly or Par, would give his parent the hail of easy equality, "H'lo, Pa."

The heads of families in the boarding-house colony were sometimes employed in the wholesale houses down-town; but oftener were clerks or floor-walkers in large dry-goods shops, or proprietors of smaller establishments on the West-side avenues. One of these gentlemen arrived at his domicile as Miss Celia Leete looked out of her window. He mechanically took his night-key from his pocket, but he replaced it, for the door was open, and most of the ladies of the house were disposed about the steps, in all the finery that "bargain counters" of Fourteenth Street could furnish. Then this

conversation fell sharply upon the dull and sultry air :

“Why, Mr. Giddens, that you? Early to-night, ain’t you? Wasn’t it awful hot down-town?”

By a delicate convention of the place, even the boarder who was in charge of the Gents’ Furnishing Goods Department of Messrs. Sonnenschein & Regenschirm, a mile up Eighth Avenue, was supposed to transact his business “down-town.”

“Hot enough for *me* [a responsive ripple of merriment]. I ain’t a hog, Miss Seavey. Why, Miss Wicks, *you* down again? Haven’t seen you in three days. Quite a stranger. How’s the neuralger?”

“Better now, thank you, Mr. Giddens; but I had an awfle siege of it this time. I was most afraid to show myself, I’ve run down so.”

“Idersed you’d run up, ‘stid ’f down. Never saw you lookin’ better.”

“Oh, Mr. Giddens, you’re so *gallant*! I wonder your wife ain’t jealous of you, you’re so *gallant* to all the ladies. There, you go right along to her, or she’ll say somethin’ to me, I know she will.” And with a gentle push, and amid much tittering, Mr. Giddens disappeared in the dark door-way.

Celia Leete turned from her window. She

was sick of life, of the place, of herself—of something, she could not quite tell what.

And yet her ailment was common enough, and simple enough, and she defined her longing sufficiently well when she said to herself, as she sometimes did, “I wish I was some one else.”

It would not require a profound psychologist, knowing who and what Miss Celia Leete was, and knowing also that she had spent one year of the most purely formative period of her young life in a semi-fashionable boarding-school, to deduce from this statement a general idea of what manner of person Miss Celia Leete wished to be, could she be some one other than herself.

Miss Celia Leete was the younger daughter of David Leete, the manufacturer of the once famous “William Riley” baking-powder. There was no levity prepense in the peculiar suggestiveness of this name. Mr. Leete had perhaps never heard of the Celtic lover who of old time was bidden by his aristocratic lady love to “rise up” and accompany her to “far Amerikey.” But he had bought the receipt for his excellent baking-powder from a clever young Irishman who chanced to be a namesake of the lovelorn emigrant whose tale is told in immortal verse, and he loyally gave the inventor due credit, and stood upon his own merits

as an honest manufacturer. It was long ago, in the earlier days of baking-powder, that David Leete put the "William Riley" on the market. It was a great success among those first adventurous housewives who were heretical enough to shake off the thralldom of yeast. Of later years, other baking-powders had crowded between it and the great baking public, yet it still sold much as it had at first, when hundreds only, instead of thousands, put faith in the fermenting powers of the new discovery. The adventurous housewives of the first generation had grown old and conservative, and they clung to the William Riley powder, and thought ill of those giddy young matrons who dallied with more modern compounds.

So David Leete was well-to-do. He might have lived in a much finer house than the white frame cottage; but that was the first house he had ever bought, and thence he had ordered that he should be borne when the time came for him to leave New York forever. For even the truest old New Yorker must now go into exile with Death, and lie down at last in a Brooklyn cemetery or far up in trim Woodlawn.

From the old house, then, he walked to his Houston Street factory every morning at eight o'clock. It had been six o'clock in the baking-

powder's first days of struggle, and then it had been seven, and half-past seven, and now that his son Alonzo was old enough to look after the business, he was thinking of making it nine. At half-past twelve he came back for dinner; at six he was at home, in his shirt-sleeves and his big slippers, waiting for supper with a good appetite and a clear conscience.

Mr. Leete had a better appetite for his supper than his younger daughter could often muster up. By six o'clock, as a general thing, the day had grown very heavy to this young lady, and she was not tempted by the cold meat, the hot biscuit, the cake and the tea which were good enough for her father and her mother, her brother Alonzo and her sister Dorinda, more commonly called Dodie or Doe.

But then there were many things that Celia did not fancy, in spite of the fact that the rest of the family liked them. Such strange differences of taste will occasionally occur in even the most conservatively regulated households—and the standard-bearer of a new school of domestic ethics has to suffer, as a rule. Were we not well abreast with the world when last we took our bearings, some twenty or thirty years ago? Are we to set our sails now to suit these saucy chits whom we ourselves brought

into the world? What was right in our time is right for all time, and there's an end of it.

Celia did not, however, suffer martyrdom because of any ideas which may have stimulated her young imagination. Her mother said she was "a peaky, Miss Nancy sort of a fussy child, not 'tall like Popper Leete, nor like my own folks, neither." Father Leete thought sometimes that she had been "spilte by that highy-tighty boardin'-school." Dorinda considered her "awfle queer," and wished she were "like the other girls," and Alonzo silently disapproved of her ways and manners—saying once, in fact, that he thought she had too many of the latter. Yet they all loved her and indulged and petted her. They did not understand her, of course; but then there was no necessity of understanding her. Children are fanciful, and Celia was still the child of the house.

And although these quoted utterances told, in a broad way, the truth about Celia's differences with the family standard of ethics, it is safe to say that no member of the household had anything like a realizing sense of that truth. If they perceived in the young woman an unwise and futile ambition, they misapprehended the nature of the ambition itself, and pictured the aspirant as desirous merely of

those material things the possession of which represented to them social superiority. If they had been asked to put their ideas in words, they would have said that Celia wished to live in a house on Fifth Avenue, to drive on that thoroughfare in a fine carriage, to give balls, and to dance the german, whatever that was, and to have her name in the *Home Journal* every week. And, doubtless, these things were all in Celia's list of vague desires; but also her heart yearned after a certain something which sometimes goes with these things, which yet she knew was not hers by birth—whereas the notion that there was any difference in human quality between themselves and the haughtiest of the people in what was called society had never entered into the head of any living Leete until Celia was sent to a boarding-school in the Orange Mountains, the year that they thought her lungs were weak.

The Leetes had, like other folks, their own little foot-rule to measure the world with, and they used it with stern and unimaginative justice. They measured all people with it—king and clodhopper, poet and peasant. If you fell below what they held to be proper stature of man, they might recognize you in your place as a fellow-mortal and a factor in the affairs of life; but they would have none of you socially.

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If you touched the exact mark, you were a "gentleman" or a "lady," as the case might be. If—by mischance—you rose above that fixed line—why, there was something wrong about you, that was sure; at the best, you were *qucer*, and *queer* was a word of serious condemnation in the Leete vocabulary.

As an instance of this impartiality in judgment, let us take the case of the Wykoffs. The Wykoffs were the owners of the whole block in which Mr. Leete's factory stood, and for thirty years old John Wykoff had been a model landlord. That is, he had treated Mr. Leete like a gentleman, and Mr. Leete had treated him like a gentleman, and everything was perfectly satisfactory. But now John Wykoff was dead, and his son reigned in his place, and it appeared that this young whippersnapper of a Randolph Wykoff, through his lawyers, had ordered that Mr. Leete's lease should not be renewed when his five years came to an end in the spring. The lease was not to be renewed that had been renewed once every five years since 1862. The rent had always been paid promptly—John Wykoff had never had to wait a day or an hour, nor had he ever been called upon to pay a cent for repairs. And here was this young pup of a son turning out his best tenant, just for some crazy scheme of

building a great co-operative factory to cover the whole block. John Wykoff was a perfect gentleman, but his son was no gentleman at all, that was one thing sure and settled.

"But I'll give him a piece of my mind," said Mr. Leete, at dinner. "I'll give him a piece of my mind when he comes back from gallivanting about Europe. Gimme some more cabbage, Ma Leete; I ain't lost my appetite, if the Wykoffs *have* gone back on me."

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Celia Leete, whose brief experience of a strange social world had led her to doubt the accuracy and the usefulness of the Leete foot-rule, sat alone, on this particular afternoon, in the chamber which she shared with Dorinda. She was trying to read a novel of local manufacture, which, according to a press-notice quoted from the Peoria *Palladium*, gave "a vivid glimpse into the highest stratum of New York's most exclusive society." It told about a young country-girl, of overpowering refinement and general moral and mental correctness, who had come to New York to pay a visit to some worldly and aristocratic relations, several of whom she lured into righteousness during her stay. This young lady was finally saved from the wiles of a titled foreign adventurer by the interposition of the hero, a dark

and superficially cynical person who had sounded all the depths and heights of swell-ness, and who, finding all things else hollow and objectionable, married her and took her off to do missionary work in the far West, where he felt that he could readily win the confidence and friendship of the miners and the Red Indians, and let the light of apostolic Episcopalianism into their darkened lives.

Celia Leete was not successful in her attempt to read this tender tale. She had got it out of the Mercantile Library on the strength of the advertisement which quoted the *Peoria Palladium's* notice. Almost all the characters had names that began with "Van" or "Van-der," and the dinner-table talk and ball-room chat were of an elegance that would have been intolerable in any but the very highest stratum of society. Yet Celia was not pleased with it. She longed for a higher social life; but this was too much for her. Her desire had in it a more modest working. She even wondered whether it was true or not—she wondered if the man who had written that book knew anything more about the life he described than she did herself. It was a puzzling thing. She wanted to be "nice;" but what was it, in fact, to be "nice"? Was it to talk in that long-winded way, and make references to all sorts of things

which could only be learned out of books? If it was, it must be desperately stupid. She wished that she had some clear idea of what really constituted that better life which she knew existed — somewhere, somehow. She wished that some sudden miracle would open a higher circle of society (she believed in “circles;” nay, in iron-bound rings of society) to the Leete family, and that all of them might be given a supernatural grace to fit them for their new surroundings.

Yes, she was looking for the Fairy Prince; that was it. She did not know it, but she was looking for him. If she could have seen deep enough into the depths of her unformulated fancy, she would have seen that the miracle she awaited was a man.

She let her eyes wander idly about the room, as she dropped the book on her lap. They rested first on Dorinda's bureau, splendid with chromo cards of variegated gorgeousness; and she sighed. Then they fell on her own severely simple chest of drawers — those her mother had owned in her girlhood. Then they turned to the window, and she looked out, and sighed again, and saw the Fairy Prince.

For the Fairy Prince still comes among us, in spite of what the photographers of fiction

say; and every now and then he marries the beggar maid, and takes her home to live with his people, and is mightily sorry for it afterward, although, as his antique prototype most likely did, he makes shift to live happily with her ever after—before the eyes of the world.

The Fairy Prince was instantly recognizable to Celia's eyes, although I am afraid other people would have seen in him no more than a good-looking, robust young man, with shoulders so broad that they drew attention from his six feet of stature—a young man with a well-bred carriage, a healthy, dark skin, fine eyes under soft, heavy, black eyebrows, good teeth, and the promise of a moustache—a young man with an expression of dignified earnestness upon his face which suggested the idea that he took things in this world somewhat seriously, and regarded his own progress through it as an event not to be lightly considered. In short, other people would have seen just such a young man as Harvard College turns out by the dozen, into a gibing, vulgar world, too much given to levity.

But Celia saw in this stranger, as he stood at her father's gate, a vast deal more than this. Perhaps she could not have told us anything further about him than that he was "dif-

ferent." Different, she meant, from the men she knew in her daily life, with a difference that was not only in looks and in bearing, but that even went, to her perception, to his very garments, or at least to his way of wearing a very plain every-day suit of tweed.

He felt about the gate for a bell-handle, and, not finding it, pushed in and walked up the path, casting an inquiring glance upward as he went, and catching a glimpse of Celia at her upper window. In another moment his ring clanged through the empty house. Mrs. Leete was making purchases for the household against Sunday. Dorinda was buying unnecessary personal adornments at twenty-seven cents and thirty-nine cents apiece, as was her wont of a Saturday afternoon. Mr. Leete and Alonzo were still at the factory, for it was pay-day, and they stayed later than the hands. And Susan, the "help," was enjoying herself at the eleventh annual picnic of the Daughters of Temperance and Grand Rebekah Protective Lodge. It was clear that Celia had to go down-stairs and answer the bell. Why should it make her heart flutter and throb with wild and irrational disturbance just to open the door to a stranger of amiable and pacific appearance?

She hurried down the stairs, after a hasty

glance at the mirror and the administration of a deft pat or two to what she called, I am sorry to say, her drapery. She wondered how she would look to such alien eyes. She wished that she were in her white flannel, her dearest dress; but there was no time for vain wishing, and she opened the door.

He had not vanished: he was there, raising his hat and asking if this were Mr. Leete's house. The quiet deference of his manner, his low, clear voice, his somewhat unfamiliar accent, all caught her pleased attention and fitted with his outward seeming into one harmonious whole that to Celia appeared nothing short of absolute masculine perfection. It was like a dream coming true; it was as though a more than human messenger had arrived, to summon her to that world which she pictured only in her thoughts. She wondered if her voice was trembling, or if her face was white. Meanwhile the young gentleman looked up at what he believed was the prettiest girl he had ever seen, and heard her say, softly and sweetly:

"Yes, this is Mr. Leete's house; but my father is not in. Do you want to see him?"

Perhaps Celia put forward her relationship to Mr. Leete thus promptly, because of some faint fear that the Fairy Prince might take her

for the house-maid, though nothing in his courtly manner suggested the idea.

"I *do* wish to see Mr. Leete," he said, and Celia thought again that his voice was quite in keeping with his other perfections. "My name is Wykoff—Randolph Wykoff—and I am anxious to speak to Mr. Leete on a matter of business. I am afraid he has been greatly annoyed by an error—an inadvertence of my agents."

"Won't you come in?" asked Celia. Randolph Wykoff! There was no doubt about this young monarch's pedigree or his possessions.

"I'm afraid I haven't time," Mr. Wykoff said, as he stepped into the entry and told his tale with a flattering deference in his manner.

"Of course I didn't mean, when I made up my mind to build on that unfortunate block—I didn't mean to give annoyance to any of the tenants—certainly not to Mr. Leete. I have always heard my father speak of Mr. Leete in the highest terms—he has often said that he would rather lose all the rest of his tenants than Mr. Leete."

It may be doubted whether John Wykoff had ever said anything quite so enthusiastic; but his son was young and impulsive, and Mr. Leete's daughter was very pretty.

"I should like very much to leave a message for Mr. Leete, if it wouldn't trouble you too much. No? Well, then, you see——"

Randolph Wykoff was in Yokohama when the news of his father's death reached him. He started for home at once, by way of Europe, for he had some business in Belgium. He was a very young man, and as soon as he began to think of anything outside of his immediate grief, he found his whole mind occupied with the consideration of his vast responsibility as the custodian of a mighty fortune. He felt that it was his duty to do something for the world. He could not tell exactly what he ought to do; but he felt that the world expected something of him, and he set to work at once, hunting for a rich man's mission. Now, he had heard of a certain model *usine* near Brussels, and he stopped on his homeward way to inspect it. It was in truth an ingeniously planned structure. By a clever economy in the design and in the application of steam-power, it gave cheap and suitable lodgment to a large number of workers in various handicrafts, forming a congeries of factories and workshops within a wonderfully small space. It was, in its way, a nineteenth-century marvel of saving in space and power. Wykoff decided at once that a similar building should

take the place of the motley group of wasteful old buildings on his Houston Street block ; and he instantly telegraphed his determination to his lawyers in New York, and instructed them not to renew leases. But his brief instructions did not make clear the fact that he meant only to give his tenants a little temporary trouble for their own permanent good ; and when he reached New York, he had to face a storm of protests from angry leaseholders. These people he was now striving to placate, and to win over to his new plans. And as the plans were really good—as he had stumbled on a wise enterprise in all honest ignorance—and as he went about his work with much youthful enthusiasm, he had less trouble than might have been looked for.

Much of all this did Mr. Randolph Wykoff communicate to Miss Celia Leete. But even after an exposition so long that he had hardly time, when he left the house, to catch the train for his mother's summer home at East Hampton—even after so long a parley, he thought it necessary to see Mr. Leete again, and in Mr. Leete's house.

"Of course," he said, "I could see him at his office ; but I must show him my plans, and my architect's place is very near here in Broadway, and unless——"

He paused.

"I'm sure father would be very glad to see you here, Mr. Wykoff," said Celia. What could she say else?

So it was arranged that Mr. Wykoff should call on Monday, just after dinner; and Mr. Wykoff took the glory of his presence out of the dark old entry, and Celia stood in the doorway just long enough to see the Fairy Prince turn at the gate and lift his hat to her. Then she went in and shut the door—and hid her face in her hands.

* * * * *

It was a grand story that Celia had to tell a little later, while her mother and Dorinda were setting the table, and Popper Leete sat in his shirt-sleeves, with his stocking-feet on the window-sill, and divided his attention between the evening paper and his chattering family. The visit of a stranger was always an event of some importance in that quiet household; surely a visitor with such a mission was a rare bird, and one to be well talked over. And then, I regret to say, there was something in the fact that the visitor was a Wykoff, something in the fact that the Wykoffs were "swells." Not that a Wykoff was better than any other man; not that a swell did not deserve the contempt of plain people with no nonsense about them—

and yet I believe that every member of that family was secretly conscious of receiving an increment of social value from the fact that a Wykoff had stood within their doors. Somehow it emphasized the fact of their common humanity. They all felt freshly reassured of the great truth—which they had always known—that they might be swells themselves, if they would but stoop to it.

“I told you, Popper Leete,” said his wife, as she trotted about the room; “I told you folks like the Wykoffs ain’t likely to play such mean tricks as that. It ain’t their way. I declare, Celia, how many napkins *have* you had this week? Now, I see your ring when you put it away yesterday, an’ it was jest as clean as it could be, that napkin. If you’re so mighty finicky, you’d better wash ’em yourself.”

Mr. Leete took Wykoff’s explanation as an admission of defeat. There are some people who cannot bear to own that they have been angry for naught.

“I thought he’d come to his senses,” Popper Leete condescended to say; “he’s a young feller, an’ he’s got suthin’ to learn in this world, he’ll find in good time. I give those lawyers a piece of my mind that time, an’ I guess he heard of it. Yes, I’m glad he’s come to his senses.”

"What'd he look like, Cele?" Dorinda pestered her; "was he reel good-lookin'? Did he have dimun' studs in his shirt? They say it's awfle toney in England to have dimun' studs."

Alonzo was the only one who took no interest in the evening's topic of conversation. His air of chill indifference showed that if young Mr. Wykoff were twenty young Mr. Wykoffs, he would have to prove his claims to notice before Alonzo Leete would waste a single question upon him.

* * * * *

Mr. Wykoff appeared promptly at one o'clock on the Monday. He had a long talk with Mr. Leete in the dining-room, and spread his plans out on the broad table. When Mr. Leete saw that for the same rent he was then paying he could have a larger factory, and that the progress of construction could be so arranged as to obviate all necessity for a double removal of his goods and chattels, he expressed a qualified approval of Mr. Wykoff's proposition. When he pointed out a few changes in the plans which he thought would better fit them for American conditions, and the suggestions were gratefully accepted, he in some manner fathered the whole scheme.

After the business-talk Mr. Wykoff went into the parlor, where the ladies of the family

had assembled, and lingered for a little chat. He found a theme in his recent travels, and he got on nobly when his auditors discovered that, while he had no objectionable personal acquaintance with the royal family of England, yet he had seen the Queen and the Prince of Wales and smaller lights of the reigning house, and could tell many entertaining things of their appearance in public, their manners, and their ways. With a tact which comes to a young man only under certain circumstances, he suppressed the fact that he had been presented at court, and said nothing of driving in coroneted carriages and dining at the tables of the great. The chat stretched out; it was past three when Celia tied up his plans for him, and he took his leave.

Dorinda thought him a reel elegant gentleman, and Mrs. Leete said: "Why, *I* think he's a nice, pleasant-spoken, well-behaved young feller. I ain't seen a young man I liked so well in some time."

It is a simple tale. Mr. Wykoff found occasion to come again with his plans, that he might avail himself of Mr. Leete's superior knowledge of the exigencies of practical business. Then he found still other occasions. When the actual work of building began, and he had to superintend it, he fell into a way of

walking home with Mr. Leete, and dropping in for a friendly call—sometimes to share a meal. He was received with a shy welcome of subtle significance from Celia, and with a flattered and fluttering cordiality on the part of the rest of the family. Even Alonzo was willing to say, in casual conversation with his friends: “Wykoff—that’s Randolph Wykoff, old John Wykoff’s son—was in at our house last night, and he said——”

But at last they all understood why he sought their society, and that was the drop of acid in the cloudy solution. There were five different individual reactions in the family of Leete. To Celia came the consciousness of a great and closely impending possibility. Her father was disturbed in mind, suspicious, and anxious. He had sufficient knowledge of the world to grasp the fact that men held, in such matters, widely differing codes of morality. He had no idea what Mr. Wykoff’s code might be. The young man seemed a well-meaning youth—but what were his intentions? Dorinda had similar doubts, and the thought of losing her only sister, coupled, perhaps, with a trifle of natural jealousy, moved her to an enmity toward the intruder which she could hardly repress. As to Alonzo, he was wounded past all soothing—wounded in the inmost tender-

ness of a hidden pride. For Alonzo's heart worshipped what his lips contemned. In his secret soul he adored swelldom. And now the aristocracy had held out its shapely hand to him, and for a brief space he had hugged the delusion that he was accepted on his own merits, and that the disadvantages of his parentage and his surroundings—which he recognized, and yet loyally accepted—did not count against him personally. And now he found that he was only the brother of a pretty girl. His spirit was filled with a bitterness that nourished itself in silence, and the dreadful things that he expected to come of the unhalloved courtship are beyond all mentioning here. Good Mrs. Leete alone stood Wykoff's friend in his wooing, and her simple, honest breast heaved with motherly pride and fond, foolish hopes and aspirations.

And meanwhile Randolph Wykoff kept on calling, and seemed totally unconscious of any loss of spontaneity or heartiness in his welcome at the house of the Leetes; and late in September he and Celia told each other that love at first sight was a living truth. After which, Randolph went home to tell his mother.

PART II.

RANDOLPH'S communication was not a surprise to his mother. In such matters the maternal instinct needs but a small clew for its wonderful intuitive processes. It is not often that a young man surprises his mother in this sort of avowal. There are such cases, but they are rare. I knew one dear old lady whose son took her aside one day. "I'm engaged," he said. "I know it, dear," the sweet old gentlewoman replied, "and I wish you would tell Sally Hastings that I shall love her as though she were my own daughter." "But it isn't Sally Hastings, mother," said the young man, who had never been a steadfast young man; "it's Miss McIlvaine, from Tonawanda."

Mrs. Wykoff had known for some months that her son was a constant visitor at the Leetes'. She knew that there were two girls in the family, and that the younger was a pretty girl, and superior to the rest of the Leetes in taste and education. She knew, also, that however valuable Mr. Leete's aid and advice might be to her son, the young man's enthusiasm for his new work was not great enough to make him forget a social code acquired by inheritance,

inculcated in early youth, and ratified by the authority of Harvard College. There was but one interpretation to be put upon his devotion to these new friends.

All this Mrs. Wykoff knew from the little her son had told her. It was little enough. Randolph was not secretive or deceitful, but he rarely talked personalities, and of his own doings he spoke no oftener than was necessary. He had a young man's sensitiveness to the criticism and comment that fall to the lot of the open-mouthed enthusiast. And then his position was not so clear to himself that he could make it clear to others. Do not blame him. If you were falling deeper and deeper into love, and knew that the object of your affections could not be acceptable to your kind parents, would you issue daily bulletins of the progress of your case, with conscientious diagnosis and prognosis? Was there ever a pair of lovers who did not yearn to keep their common joy eternally a selfish secret? Frown all you care to, stern censor; if all the lovers had their way, there would not be desert islands enough to go around.

Mrs. Wykoff knew something and guessed a great deal, yet she could not act either on the certainty or the suspicion. She knew that she could not oppose Randolph. He had all his father's

self-confidence and stubborn courage without—the widow sadly thought—without, as yet, John Wykoff's clear judgment, fine sense of right and wrong, and unselfish devotion to principle.

John Wykoff's wife knew well the Wykoff strain. She married John Wykoff when his father, by ill-judged speculations, had ruined not himself only but all the Wykoff family, root and branch, and had made himself hated by the whole body of his kith and kin. She had been her husband's best friend and counsellor through all the years it took to build up again the great shipping house of Wykoff & Son, and during those years she had led a pinched, narrow, meagre life. Then, when the new fortune was made, and the honor and credit of the old firm reëstablished, it was her tact that won them admission to the society from which Grandfather Wykoff's recklessness and their own poverty had exiled them. It was her task to renew old associations, to strengthen long-enfeebled ties, to close up breaches, and negotiate reconciliations. She had to bear snubs and slights; she had to win her right to respect and esteem in a long and hard fight; and all that she had to do and bear was done and borne, not for her own sake, but for the sake of her husband and her boy. For herself she had

no need to take thought ; she was a Broadwood, of Philadelphia, and her family thought that she lowered herself when she married the son of a bankrupt Wykoff.

The struggle had ended years ago, and now Mrs. Wykoff was a widow, still handsome, rich in money and in friends. The discipline of her life had not been lost on her. Her nature, that was always sweet, had grown strong in troublous times, and she was, at forty-five, a chastened woman of the world. I think the world makes as many saints as sinners.

She received her son's story with a calm acceptance of the situation that ought to have put him on his guard. To be sure, she cried a little, but only for a moment ; and for the rest she was all loving interest and attention. It must be said for Randolph that, having come to confession, he made a good, honest, clean breast of it. He made no attempt to put an imaginative gilding on the Leetes. In speaking of the family he dwelt only on their unimpeachable probity and respectability. Of Celia he could truthfully say that her manners and her speech were correct. If he dwelt too much on her intelligence, on her cleverness, and on her understanding of and sympathy with his hopes and ambitions, it must be kept in mind that Celia was an uncommonly good listener.

"I am thinking of your happiness, my dear," his mother said; "I trust I am not selfish. I could have wished, of course, that it had been some one who—some one whom I knew and loved, but——"

There lurked in this broken sentence an allusion that Randolph understood—an allusion to a cherished hope of his mother's. Perhaps he felt in some way guilty, for he made no direct reply, saying only :

"You will know Celia, mother, and you will love her. You cannot help it."

"I hope so," said the poor woman, with the best smile that she had for the occasion. "When shall I see her? Would it not be well for me to call on her mother?"

Randolph Wykoff went away from this interview with an easy mind and a heart filled with loving admiration of his mother. She was a wonderful woman, he thought, thus to combine feminine gentleness with masculine common-sense. How kindly and how wisely she had taken it! It did not come into his mind that in the course of that brief conversation he had been led to propose and to pledge himself to two things which he had never thought of before—first, that there should be no announcement of his engagement to Celia—no actual engagement, in fact—for a year to come; second,

that the engagement should be of not less than a year's duration from the date of the announcement. These two ideas seemed to have been of his own conception. He knew, or he thought he knew, how much personal annoyance his marriage to Celia Leete would bring him. He had no desire to add to this annoyance, or be guilty of a precipitancy which he himself could not excuse. His world would be ill-spoken enough; it was not for him to justify unkind criticism. It came to him as the most natural thing imaginable that Celia Leete ought to be introduced to some of his friends, at least, as Celia Leete, before they knew her as his betrothed. And he could hardly get his present business off his hands and feel free to devote himself to a wife short of a year or two of hard work.

Three days later Mrs. Wykoff was sitting in the darkened front parlor of the Leete house on the hair-cloth sofa under the chromo of the "Old Oaken Bucket." On the opposite wall hung the ambrotype of Mrs. Leete's mother, taken at the age of eighty-seven. Mrs. Leete's mother showed a mouth that seemed to be simply a straight line where the lips turned in. What little hair she had hung in a large flat festoon on either side of her head. A broad lace collar covered her shoulders. It was

fastened under the chin by a brooch of vast size, which was, in fact, a box with a glass front, designed, apparently, to contain specimens of the hair of deceased members of the wearer's family, after the depressing fashion of the days of ambrotypes and inchoate civilization. On the face of Mrs. Leete's mother was an expression of stern resolve. She was sitting for her picture, and she was sitting hard.

Mrs. Wykoff was gazing hopelessly at this monument of respectability when Mrs. Leete entered the room, red in the face from a hasty change of dress, and agitated by a nervousness the existence of which she would not have admitted to herself.

Why does your thoroughbred collie bark at the tramp or the peddler within your gates, and greet shabbiest gentlehood with a friendly wag of the tail? It is because there is a difference in human beings, just as there is in dogs, and the dogs know it. The human beings know it, too, although there are some who belie their knowledge—who, having learned that the rank is but the guinea's stamp and that the man's the gowd for a' that, go about trying to make themselves and others believe that there is no such thing as an alloy in the world, no counterfeit coin, no base metal.

Mrs. Leete was agitated even to her inmost spiritual recesses when she saw this handsome and well-dressed woman rise and come forward to meet her, with such an easy grace and dignity—with such a soft rustling of her black raiment. It was five minutes at least before the perfect tact that went with these outward and visible things had put the hostess at her ease.

After a little, Celia came shyly into the room, with cold hands and a pale face. Mrs. Wykoff's heart leaped in pleased surprise when she saw the girl of her son's choice. She kissed Celia almost with tenderness, and she felt a genuine thankfulness for the child's delicate beauty and her modest bearing. "I can understand it now," she thought, "and it is better than I had dared to hope."

But presently in came Mr. Leete, in his Sunday broadcloth, with a new collar making him very uncomfortable about the chin, and with him came Dorinda, red as to her bodice and black as to her skirts and wonderful as to the dressing of her hair, and all was not so well with Mrs. Wykoff.

Mrs. Wykoff's visit lasted scarcely an hour, yet, when she had gone, every member of the family except Celia felt that affairs wore a new and less pleasing aspect. There was no longer

a delightful certainty about the prospective alliance of the Leetes to one of the oldest and wealthiest families in the country. Three days before, Randolph Wykoff had asked Mr. Leete for his daughter's hand, and the offer had been accepted with no longer hesitation than was absolutely demanded by the self-respect of the head of the house. Since then, all the family had lived in a rose-tinted dream. Now, Mrs. Wykoff's friendly, informal chat had somehow served to marshal before their eyes an array of hard, cold, unwelcome facts. How had it been done? They did not know. They could not blame Mrs. Wykoff; she had been amiability itself. Yet there were the facts, patent to all of them. Why, it was Mr. Leete himself who had advanced the idea that for two young people to talk of marriage after three months of acquaintance was simply absurd. It was he who had said that people—he did not perhaps know what people, but, in fact, *people*—would comment with justifiable severity upon such heedless haste. Certainly the suggestion that at least a year must elapse before the announcement of the engagement had come from him; and none of the house of Leete was sufficiently versed in the subtleties of polite diplomacy to inquire how the notion came *to* Mr. Leete.

It was at Popper Leete, in very truth, that

Mrs. Wykoff had directed her masked batteries, and with more effect than she suspected. She had touched lightly on Randolph's youth, his inexperience, his impulsive nature, and she had called attention to the undeniable truth that young men do not always know their own minds. Mr. Leete had taken the hint, and to his mind it had an exaggerated significance.

"I d'no but what she's right," he said to his wife; "mebbe we've been too easy about sayin' 'yes.' She's a business-woman, and she's got a good, sound head. Folks useter say that John Wykoff and wife was as good a business firm as there was in town. Now, she knows this young feller, an' what do we know about him? Nothin', when you come right down *to* it. We don't know what his ideas are, or what sort of a man he is, anyway. We don't know how he spends his evenin's, or what he does with himself when we don't see him. Now, s'pose he was on'y foolin' with Celia, and was to get tired of her an' skip out to Europe, some day eruther? We can't tell. S'pose he was to marry her and then turn out bad? Look at the way them Newport folks are all the time gittin' divorced an' bein' shown up in the noozpapers. How do we know but what he's bean a-makin' up to a dozen girls over there in Europe. Now, reelly, we don't

know much more about that young man than if he was a European himself."

"Oh, Popper Leete," remonstrated his wife, "'tain't so bad as *that* ! "

"Well," Mr. Leete insisted, shaking his head in stubborn doubt, "'tain't much better, when you come right down *to* it."

* * * * * *

There are plenty of married couples in the world who can lay their hands on their twain hearts and unanimously declare that the time of their betrothal was the happiest times of their lives. There are other people, however, who can as honestly say that they were never more uncomfortable and generally miserable than they were in the No Man's Land through which civilized matrimony must be approached.

Perhaps the months or years of engagement may be enjoyable to those who enter upon their contract in a business-like and practical spirit, or to those easy-going mortals who take their love on trial, much as they might take a type-writer or a patent lamp. But to two young people dreadfully in love and dreadfully in earnest, this stretch of time is like the trying pause when the soldier on the battle-field waits for the order to advance.

The woman's position is certainly doubtful and disagreeable. She belongs neither to her

parents nor to her betrothed—not even to herself. Hers is the proud prerogative of deciding between blue and pink for the dining-room paper, between script and old English for the engraving on the spoons—while, perhaps, her former owners and her future owner are settling on a religion for her and for her children *in posse*.

We do not all of us have to suffer the possible rigors of this state of interregnum. The kindly refinements of modern life make the situation as agreeable as may be. Yet, among the gentlest and most delicate of people, it is often a situation at best but barely tolerable. What must it be among people who are not given to yielding to others, and who are given to speaking their minds—those hastily made-up minds which, for the most part, were best left unspoken?

It was a cock-sure and outspoken family into which Randolph Wykoff had tumbled; and one that had well-defined opinions on all matters of personal conduct, and wanted no new lights from any source. And as Randolph himself could be cock-sure on occasion, and as he certainly had not come down to Chelsea Village to seek illumination on any dark points of social doctrine, a clash was inevitable, and the clash came promptly.

It came when the chilling truth was first clearly recognized by the Leetes that young Mr. Wykoff was engaged to Celia exclusively, and did not hold himself bound to the rest of the family by any ties so tender. To be sure, Wykoff was the soul of kindly courtesy in his relations with them all, and yet, like the old farmer in *Punch*, sipping airy champagne in place of his accustomed old ale, they "didn't seem to get no forr'ader." When Randolph broke one of Mrs. Leete's teacups, he made the accident an excuse for sending her a full tea-set so delicate of mould that Mrs. Leete never dared to use it. He gave Father Leete a meerschaum that he had brought from Europe. He adorned Alonzo's scarf with a scarabæus of rare beauty. (Alonzo held the gift but lightly until it occurred to him to have its money value appraised at a Broadway jeweller's.) He loaded Celia with gifts, and he did not forget to select for her sister, every now and then, a trinket of a fashion more noticeable than he would have held fitting for his betrothed. And as for flowers—he made the dingy house brilliant with the artificial refinements of the hot-house. But beyond courteous speech and an open hand, they soon found that nothing was to be expected of the new comer in the family circle.

Alonzo had to accept the obvious fact that he would never be put up at Mr. Randolph Wykoff's club, even if he sought such an honor—which he told his own conscience he did not. Dorinda saw bright visions fade before her eyes when she learned that Mr. Wykoff, whether he were in mourning or out of mourning, was not in the habit of taking his "lady friends" to the public balls, and that he did not so much as know the "Triton" from the "Männerchor." And Mrs. Leete, while she understood that John Wykoff's widow must live for many months, at least, in strict retirement from the world, yet felt that it had in some subtle way been made clear to her own perceptions that the hand of Society would never be stretched out to the Leetes at the particular request of the Wykoffs.

There was no question about it, Mr. Wykoff had no proper sense of his position as a prospective son- and brother-in-law; and hint and suggestion fell upon his calm unconsciousness of his delinquency as little sparks upon the breast of an ice-bound lake. They did their best to bring him to a knowledge of what they called among themselves "the proper thing;" but neither precept nor example availed against his vast innocent ignorance.

In this he was quite honest, although the

Leete family could hardly believe it. It did occur to him, at one time, that he had been made to hear a great deal about a certain Mr. Cargill, soon to be wedded to one of Dorinda's bosom friends. This gentleman had acquired what seemed to Randolph a strange habit of taking his bride-to-be and all her family, including a maiden aunt, to the theatre some four or five times a week. For this ceremony, or operation, Mr. Cargill was wont to array himself, according to Dorinda's account, in a swallow-tail coat, a lavender satin tie, and an embroidered shirt. But beyond a vague wonder if perchance Cargill completed this costume with shepherd's plaid trousers and Roman sandals, Mr. Wykoff saw no hidden significance in the parable.

Thus it came to pass that Randolph, for his contumacious and persistent abiding in darkness, was put under a ban by all save one member of the family. Father and Mother Leete, it is true, visited their displeasure upon him only passively, and far, far more in sorrow than in anger. But Alonzo and Dorinda declared him anathema, and would have none of him. I need hardly say that their parents knew nothing of this unwise severity.

There was a time when Wykoff was welcomed at the portal by Celia's brother or her

sister, as it might happen. (It was a convention in the family—one of the “whats” which are “what”—that Celia might not with propriety open the front door to her beloved.) He was allowed to meet her in the hall-way, and they went into the parlor to chat out their private chat. Then they joined the family circle in the dining-room, where the evening lamp shone cheerily on the red cloth that turned the dining-table into a centre-table, and Randolph answered questions about his mother’s health, or talked of building matters with Mr. Leete, or made engaging conversation on topics judiciously selected from the news of the day.

But that time was long past ere the winter had travelled over the brow of Christmas Hill. Now it was always Dorinda who opened the door to him. He did not know it, but Dorinda, on the nights when he might be looked for, took her seat by the dining-room door, on the most uncomfortable chair in the room, and awaited his coming in a gloomy spirit of duty. She always opened the door with the chain up, and peered through the crack as though she were expecting a stranger of murderous intentions. Then she said, with the corners of her mouth drawn down in a painful smile: “Oh, I *beg* your pardon, Mr. Wykoff; I didn’t know

it was you, to-night." The door was closed, the chain let down, the door swung open slowly, and Randolph was admitted, to face a greeting that rarely varied much in form :

"I don't *s'pose* you want to see the *fam'ly*, Mr. Wykoff; if you'll be so *kind* as to step into the *parlor*, I'll tell my *sister* you're here."

Dorinda had reduced the difficult arts of irony and sarcasm to a few simple formulas of vigorous emphasis, applied to the direct deliverances of ordinary conversation. Yet, had it not been for a certain ring of triumphant satisfaction in her tone, and a sparkle of proud achievement in her eye, Wykoff would perhaps have failed to suspect her intent.

In the front parlor, dimly lit and chilly—Alonzo was in charge of the furnace—Randolph awaited his betrothed. After what was held a proper and dignified space of time, she was permitted to join him. She came in, often, with a flush high on her cheeks and with a fluttering breath, and hid her head on his shoulder, where he let it lie. He was not an observant young man, he was not a demonstrative wooer, but he felt that his little girl was suffering persecution, and he pitied her.

He had more than Dorinda's depressing salutation to open his eyes. As he sat in the shadowy parlor, waiting for Celia, he heard

Dorinda return to the dining-room to announce his coming. Her entrance was followed by a silence. Then came a loud grunt, from far down in Mr. Leete's deep lungs, as if he said, "Oh, is *that* all?" Sometimes a profound sigh was audible through the closed folding-doors, and he could guess that there was a weight on Mother Leete's mind. And regularly, every night that he sat there, he heard Alonzo arise, march through the hall, put on his coat and hat, and go out into the night. And in doing this simple thing, Alonzo contrived, in every step along the hall, to put a staccato accentuation into the setting down of his heel which could not fail to carry its meaning to the lost soul in the front parlor. It was the righteous man stalking out of the neighborhood of the accursed thing.

But of Celia's sufferings at her relatives' hands Randolph had an exaggerated conception. Alonzo and Dorinda annoyed her in their different ways, but she was quite able to take care of herself in every sort of family spat. She was gentle of spirit, gentle in her tastes; but she had learned to spar in many wordy contests, and she was now no longer dependent upon the love or the approval of either Alonzo or her sister. Indeed, all minor matters, all the little things of the house which had been important

to her a few months before, meant nothing to her now. She was leading a life of which her brother, her sister, her father, her mother, knew nothing ; she was walking in paths where their petty jealousies, spites, disappointments, and misunderstandings could not follow her.

There is, however, no telling where combatants like Alonzo and Dorinda will stop when they once start on a line of aggressive conduct. It is not enough for them to see that their weapons strike home ; to see the punctures, to know, whatever momentary exaltation of soul may stay the physical pain of the victim, that, sooner or later, the wounds must begin to bleed, and the tender flesh to burn with fever. Theirs is a grosser warfare. They must see the suffering, they must hear the cries ; they must realize that they have inflicted material damage before they can feel that they have done what they set out to do. Especially must their vengeance be complete when it constitutes what they consider merited punishment—and to judge and to punish is the especial mission of these right-thinking and right-doing people, who, being ever in the right, have but small pity for those erring mortals who have not their light.

So it was not long before Dorinda laid down the foil of polite irony, and took to broad-

sword-practice. She had been content with the pleasure to be derived from outspoken conjectures as to her sister's probable behavior after she should have joined her "swell friends"—whether or no she would recognize her kinsfolk when she met them on the street—or look at any one who lived in a frame house—or use baking-powder in her kitchen. But now she relieved her mind with open and vituperative onslaughts upon Randolph Wykoff, his mother, and all that they stood for and represented in the social scheme. She gave up going to the door to let Randolph in, and that duty was delegated to Alonzo, who performed it in absolute silence, with a discourteous hostility in his bearing that, had he not been Celia Leete's brother, would have got him a sound thrashing at the hands of a young gentleman who had been held, in his time, one of the prettiest middle-weight boxers that had ever sparred at Harvard College.

It was a most unpleasant state of things for the engaged pair, and they talked it over at every meeting. Wykoff was for going to Mr. Leete and demanding an abatement of the nuisance; but Celia, who underestimated the strength of her position, told him that parental interference would only embitter her persecutors, and make her lot the harder; and her

lover unwillingly held his peace. It was Dorinda who brought matters to a climax.

Mrs. Wykoff had been ill. Her lungs were not over-strong, and she had been taken with something that looked like pneumonia. Randolph stopped at the Leetes, late one January afternoon, to tell Celia of his mother's progress toward recovery. He was admitted by the servant—a rare event; for attendance upon the front door was not among that handmaid's many duties. She let him into the parlor, and there he found Dorinda, volubly entertaining a young man and a young woman whom he at once guessed to be the much-vaunted Cargill and his bride-elect. Cargill was a tall young man with a large black moustache. His clothing had that effect of shiny and unwrinkled newness which is rarely to be observed save on the wire frames in the tailors' windows. Huge diamonds sparkled on his fingers, in his necktie, and even in a shamelessly exposed collar-stud. Mrs. Cargill, that was to be, was clad in a blue velvet dress that just held its own for brilliancy against Dorinda's red bodice of state.

The Cargill and the Cargill-expectant glanced at the Wykoff as he entered and sat down in the farthest corner of the room. Dorinda did not even turn her head, but pitched the con-

versation in a higher key, so that he might lose no word of it.

"Was you at the Sweatmans' sociable?" she inquired.

"Nope," said Mr. Cargill, sucking the big silver head of his cane.

"I heard it was real el'gant," Miss Leete ran on; "I couldn't go—ma 'n' me had to go to a meetin' of the church fair c'mittee. I s'pose you know I'm goin' to have the Rebekah booth at the fair. Hope you're comin' to patronize me. I'll sell you some lem'nade—'f you ever drink lem'nade, Mr. Cargill."

The simper with which this speech was ended was a beautiful tribute to Cargill in his quality of man of the world.

"Ain't sellin' beer this trip?" was Mr. Cargill's jocular inquiry. "Then I guess I'll take lem'nade. Sell a stick with it?"

"Oh, do hush," said the bride-elect, dabbing at him with her muff, and pretending to be scandalized at his wickedness. "*I* think lem'nade's reel nice, don't you, D'rinda? I'm comin' to get some, 'n' I'm goin' to make *him* pay for it, too."

Two treble laughs and a bass laugh did honor to this witticism, and, when the spasm of merriment was over, Dorinda began again.

"D'you see Mr. Cree at the Sweatmans'? *I*

think he's one 'f the nicest gentlemen I ever saw."

Celia was out ; it was a quarter of an hour before she came in, and through that quarter of an hour Randolph Wykoff sat in his corner of the parlor and heard the chronicle of a society that in one way might well be called, as it would have called itself, "el'gant."

This was bad enough, but there was worse yet. The visitors took their leave at last, and Dorinda followed them into the hallway. She closed the door behind her, but one door was a poor obstruction to Dorinda's voice, and Wykoff heard what probably it was intended that he should hear :

"*Him?* Oh, that's Mr. Wykoff — Celia's friend, you know—he ain't any 'f *mine*. I'd have introduced you, on'y I don't hardly know him well enough. We ain't fine enough for him, 'n' I thought maybe our friends wasn't. Guess you ain't lost much, though."

When Celia came in Randolph told her, as gently as possible, but definitely and definitively, that thereafter he would come to the house only when her sister was not at home, and he kept his word.

Yet they had to see each other, and so they fell into a bad way of meeting in the streets. Celia contrived to let her lover know that on

such a day a shopping tour would bring her through such and such a street at this or that hour; and at the time and place appointed, Randolph would meet her to walk home with her. This unwise arrangement brought itself to a timely end, happily for both of them. Celia's sources of supply were among the marts of fashion that line West Fourteenth Street and the region round about. Thence she could find no route homeward on which a young man like Randolph Wykoff could have the ghost of an excuse for loitering. He therefore suggested to her to make her purchases at the larger shops on Broadway, so that he might join her in the quiet side-streets to the east of the great thoroughfare. Those streets between Union and Madison Squares are, for the most part, given over to boarding-houses and lodging-houses of dull respectability, and although they are not much traversed, they lie in lines that any one might follow who would pass from Murray Hill to—say, for a fine old-fashioned quarter, Stuyvesant Square. And as the Wykoffs lived near Stuyvesant Square, Randolph might well take any one of them on his way home, without drawing undesired attention to the fact of his meeting a young lady, and turning on his track to walk a few blocks with her.

But the Broadway tradesmen have not the

Fourteenth Street idea of "bargains;" and it soon became known in the Leete household, where nothing was done in privacy, that Celia was buying embroidery silk, and gros-grain ribbons, and cotton lace, and ruchings, and the like, at prices that were simply scandalous to the apprehensions of Fourteenth Street shoppers. Dorinda drew her own conclusions, which were quite correct; she communicated them to her mother; her mother brought the case before Mr. Leete, and he, summoning Celia to his presence, heard the whole story. Up to that point Celia had suffered in silence, obeying that unnumbered commandment which the experience of childhood has added to the Decalogue: *Thou Shalt Not Tell Tales*. Now, there was nothing for it but to uncover the history of her ill-treatment and her lover's at the hands of Alonzo and Dorinda. Popper Leete heard; he constituted himself a dictatorial court of inquiry and judgment, and when the culprits had made their inadequate defence, he laid down the law.

"I want this nonsense stopped right here," he said, sternly; "when your ma 'n' me wanter break off that match we'll do it, an' when we want any help from either of you we'll let you know. What your ma an' me think of him is none of your business, you understand! When

he comes here you want to treat him decent and civil. I'm ashamed of you, that a gentleman should come into my house, and be treated so by you two young whippersnappers that he can't come to see your sister like she was a lady. Don't let me hear of this nonsense no more; you hear me—NO more! An' quit a-naggin' of your sister!"

Mr. Leete's judgment, once put forth, allowed no disobedience, either in letter or in spirit, and as he took pains in his own person to show a proper and dignified courtesy toward Mr. Wykoff, it was not long before Celia and her betrothed were enjoying to the full such comfort as there may be in a forced peace. But it was not a pleasant air to breathe, and though the occasion of their parting was sad in itself, they both felt more relief than either would have cared to own when Randolph was summoned to Florida, where his mother lay ill. She had gone South to regain strength, after her illness of January, only to catch cold again in six weeks. She was nursed by the two Curtis girls, the daughters of her favorite cousin, and she was well nursed; but her relapse proved a serious matter, and Randolph was sent for. He set out at once, and stayed with his mother until the worst was over, and while she regained her strength. It was in

the last of May that he brought her home to the old Wykoff house near East Hampton. During this time he and Celia corresponded with regularity. It was a most satisfying correspondence, at the bottom, as our French friends say ; but when Randolph tied up the little package of letters and tucked it away in the safest corner of the trunk that he was packing for the homeward journey, he thought that perhaps it would be a good thing to suggest to Celia that he would be greatly pleased if she cared to read one or two books that he had found serviceable in his own studies.

* * * * *

One little incident that took place just before Mrs. Wykoff went to Florida made a deep impression upon Mr. Leete, and set him to thinking uneasily of the future. His wife drew his attention to the fact that, Mrs. Wykoff having passed through a serious illness, a call of congratulation from the head of the house of Leete would be an appropriate and delicate attention to the convalescent. Perhaps, the good wife suggested, the Leete family had been remiss in such matters of courtesy. Mrs. Wykoff's visit was still unreturned, and, as Mrs. Leete truly said, it was only because Popper Leete had kept saying that he would go with her some day, and

had never yet found the day to suit him. *Now*, they didn't both of them want to go streakin' down there together, when Mrs. Wykoff was sick, or sort of sick; and she herself couldn't go, with the church fair to look after; but Popper Leete could just as well as not, and it would look as if they meant to do the right thing; and if he'd go now, he'd never have to go again, and he might just as well go, and have *done* with it.

Mr. Leete went. Dressed in his Sunday broadcloth, he presented himself at the door of the Wykoffs' great house on Second Avenue, and gave the liveried menial his one card, neatly written in Dorinda's elaborate "Anserian System" handwriting.

Mrs. Wykoff was lying on the lounge in her sunny sitting-room, which looked out on a little snow-covered corner of the garden, where a half-clad Venus snatched at her scanty raiment, and looked as though she would like to be able to shudder, and shake the snow off her bare shoulders.

Mr. Leete had a pleasant call. He soon found himself talking readily with the gentle, gracious lady on the lounge, and he was so much at his ease that he was even able to cast furtive glances at the room and its furniture—rich, yet simple and old enough in fash-

ion to come within the scope of his knowledge. He was so much at ease, indeed, that when Mrs. Wykoff's tea was brought in he accepted her offer of a cup, and becoming interested in the conversation, dropped the cup on the floor and broke it into many fragments.

He was deeply distressed. It took all Mrs. Wykoff's tact and discretion to make him feel that she saw no uncommon awkwardness in his mishap.

"They are absurd things, those little egg-shell cups," she said; "they are forever breaking. Randolph brought me that set only three months ago, and I think that he and I between us have contrived to break half a dozen cups since then. Don't give it another thought, please."

Mr. Leete did give it another thought, however. He gave it thought enough to privily examine the mark on the bottom of the broken cup. It bore a French name, strange to him; but he succeeded in getting some sort of mental picture of the combined characters. In his own phrase, he sized it up roughly. When, a quarter of an hour later, he found himself in the street, with no clear idea of the means by which his visit had been brought to a painless close and an easy exit, he was already nursing the germ of a great idea.

Why should not a Leete, as well as a Wykoff, replace a broken set of chinaware? Mrs. Wykoff had said that six cups were already gone—Mr. Leete's cup made the seventh. Here was a chance to perform an act of substantial courtesy, and with credit to the family. "I guess I'll do a little suthin' in the crockery line myself," thought Mr. Leete.

He remembered that Randolph's gift of china had come from a well-known shop on Broadway, and thither he went at once. A polite little salesman met him near the door of the long wareroom, and inquired his pleasure. Mr. Leete was conscious of feeling large, ponderous, and solid amid all the fragility. Faïence and Limoges were in front of him, Sèvres and Belleek to right and left, and his eyes rested on nothing simpler or more modest than that sturdy Meissen ware which is still honored under the name of Dresden.

"I want some tea-things," began Mr. Leete, "of the kind you call—" the French word failed him, but his eye lit on the thing itself, a set of the identical pattern, different only in color, lying in state among the satin folds of a huge leather case.

"There—them!" he said; "that's what I'm lookin' for, only I want it in blue."

"We haven't a blue set, sir," said the clerk;

"we had one, but we sold it a few months ago."

"D'ye know who you sold it to?" queried Mr. Leete, hiding his detective intent under a mask of simplicity. "Maybe the party would be willin' to sell."

The clerk smiled superciliously.

"I hardly think so," he said; "our trade is pretty much with private customers."

"I'd like to have you make sure," persisted Mr. Leete; "I want blue, an' I'm willin' to pay for it."

The salesman trotted to the back of the shop, and spoke to a clerk at a desk. The clerk fluttered the leaves of a great book, and the salesman trotted back, with a superior smile on his lips.

"I don't think you'll be very successful, sir," he said; "that other set was bought by Mr. Wykoff, son of old John Wykoff, who died last year. You may have heard of him. They're one of the oldest families in the city, and one of the richest. I don't believe they'd be willing to dispose of anything they bought."

"I've heard of 'em," said Mr. Leete, smiling in his turn. He wanted to see that salesman's face when he told him to box up the pink set and send it to Mrs. John Wykoff, Second Ave-

nue. After all, the pink would do as well as the blue.

"What's the price of this set here?" he asked, touching one of the egg-shell cups with a careful finger.

"Four hundred and twenty dollars," said the salesman.

"Eh?" said Mr. Leete.

"Very cheap at that, sir—marked down from four hundred and seventy-five. All hand-painted by one of the first artists in France. Only these two sets ever imported—quite unique."

"Hum!" snorted Mr. Leete, "too bad you ain't got the blue. Good-day."

Out in the street he made a rapid calculation.

"Four hundred 'n' twenty—cup 'n' saucer's one piece, I s'pose; one ain't good for much 'thout t'other—twelve—teapot, jug, an' sugar's fifteen—wa'n't no slop-bowl—fifteen into four hundred 'n' twenty—twenty-eight dollars. Moses Taylor!"

This is the New Yorker's special oath of astonishment; though why that eminent and sober-minded merchant has received such strange canonization in the calendar of mild profanity no one may know. When he was at home he told his wife all about it, and shook

his head dubiously as he drew some uncomfortable conclusions.

"I don't see," he said, "that we've got any occasion to travel with folks that c'n smash twenty-eight dollars' wuth 'f crockery an' not so much as know it. That ain't any sort of housekeeping for Celia. She ain't been brought up in that way, an' I don't want her to get sech ideas. Twenty-eight dollars! Why, Ma Leete, I'd ruther have her eat off stone china all the days 'f her life—an' so would you."

* * * * *

And yet Mr. Leete was as much pleased as was his wife when, in July, a letter came from Mrs. Wykoff, at East Hampton, inviting Celia to spend a few weeks at the Wykoff homestead.

"You will have a dull time," she wrote, "for I am still something of an invalid, and, of course, we see no one; but my nieces—I call them so—are spending the summer with me, and they and Randolph will do what they can to make it pleasant for you. Write me that you will come, and Parker, my faithful factotum, will call for you and make you comfortable on your journey."

Even Alonzo felt some tender stirrings toward mercy in the depths of his stern soul; and Dorinda gave it as her opinion that Celia

could adequately display her self-respect and sense of independence by delaying her answer for the space of twenty-four hours.

As it took poor Celia that time to prepare a missive sufficiently lofty in tone to pass the family conclave, Dorinda had her own way, and, being placated, entered with an interest only too active and energetic into the preparation of her sister's paraphernalia.

PART III.

DORINDA threw herself upon the task of preparing Celia for the fray with a zeal and ardor that brought only dismay to her younger sister's breast. It having been decided that the victim of society must have some new gowns, Dorinda at once planned a wardrobe of variegated brilliancy. Celia strove with all her tact for a more modest working, but she had to stand up and do battle-royal for her own standards when Dorinda wanted her to purchase a certain "Dame Trot" garment, of a pattern which was at the time exciting the irreverent attention of the press. They came to an open rupture. Celia finally ap-

pealed to the head of the house, who decided, with masculine justice, that she was entitled to choose her clothes for herself. Dorinda writhed; but came back to the fascinating employment more in sorrow than in anger.

When the little trunk was at last packed, Dorinda's verdict on the contents was that they were good enough, but had no sort of style about them. Celia, doubtful of their possessing any merits at all, took a negative comfort from this. Ah! if she could only gather an idea of Mrs. Wykoff's likes from Dorinda's dislikes!

The day came when Mrs. Wykoff's maid was to convey her charge to the further shore of Long Island. This relegation of Celia to a menial's care had somewhat troubled the family conclave; but it had been decided that, in view of the differences in social ethics revealed by past dealings with the Wykoff family, it would be fair to assume that the lady's intent was respectful, however much her course was open to the criticism of the right-minded. The sun was shining on the mid-day dinner when the carriage was announced; Celia had finished a nervous attempt at a meal, and was ready for the ordeal. Five napkins fell to the ground, and amid a storm of caresses and tears Celia was hustled to the door. Even Alonzo shook

her hand with a stern cordiality which hinted that, under favorable circumstances, all might yet be forgiven. Her father kissed her brow, and in a minute she was in the carriage—the Wykoff carriage—with Parker.

Parker was a Briton, and she stood by her colors. Long years before, when her firm but kindly rule over Mrs. Wykoff was just beginning, her employer made one single effort to treat her as an American.

“Your name is Jane, I believe?” she said: “I will call you Jane, I think, hereafter, instead of Parker.”

Jane Parker dropped an old-world courtesy, and set her thin lips.

“Indeed, mum, I would not be that disrespectful to my betters; and I ’ope, mum, you will not insist.” Mrs. Wykoff did not insist, and Parker remained Parker.

The carriage rolled away, and Celia leaned back in her corner and felt a delicious glow of yearning fright and mysterious hope. Opposite her sat Parker, bolt upright, an eminently respectable guide to the gates of Elysium. Beyond her, through the windows, Celia saw the silver W tossing on the rounded flanks of the Wykoff horses. At the railroad station—or the corral called by that name—Stephen met them, Mrs. Wykoff’s aged but efficient butler

and general manager—the masculine equivalent of Parker. Here they were taken under the wing of that vigilance of which an accomplished servitor like Stephen makes a pride. Celia did nothing for herself, she was not even sure that she had used her own means of locomotion when she found herself seated in the best seat in the car, Parker close behind her, her light wrap and little satchel on the seat by her side, and a monthly magazine on her lap.

She had not thought of taking a book with her, and she did not even know that for this delicate attention she was indebted to Stephen's own inspiration. Later she learned of the conscientious care he had given to the selection. He felt it his duty to report his exercise of discretion to Mrs. Wykoff.

"Seeing her unprovided, ma'am," he explained, "I felt that I might go so far. I would not take the responsibility of choosing what a young lady should read, but I had seen that particular paper here on your own table, ma'am, and I run through it on the news-stand to see that there was no nudity pictures nor anything that you could object to, ma'am."

Celia hardly glanced at her magazine. She was too full of a new and sweet content to care to read any other woman's love-story. She looked out of the window, and was interested

in the landscape. Perhaps no one else ever cared to look at that dull, flat country, divided between swampiness and aridity; but Celia gazed at it with an indulgence that had in it a touch of proprietorship. Most of the time, however, it pleased her to lean back in her seat and *sense* the guardianship of her lover's emissaries. It was as though the ægis of her Prince of the Golden World was stretched out over her. She had discovered Stephen sitting unobtrusively at the furthest end of the car, watching her with a steady eye that took in all her surroundings, her every movement. She half lifted her hand toward the window—he was at her side in an instant, and had raised the sash. She drew back a little from the draught—Parker silently slipped her wrap over her shoulders. At one of the stations a tall, handsome young man entered and wandered down the aisle, looking for a seat. His eye fell on the empty place next to hers; then, as if lured by some strange magnetism, that youthful masculine eye was attracted to Stephen's, sitting weazened and bent in the far corner of the car, and the young man passed on his way. Celia felt sure that if he had hesitated in the least, he would have been snatched up and wafted into the most distant car on the train. Surely such service was sweet.

It was dusk when they arrived at the station nearest to the Wykoffs' place—a summery dusk, yet chill and damp. Randolph was waiting, with his mother's victoria. He did not kiss her; he only pressed her hand and murmured "Dearest!" in stately confidence. There were people all about them; it could not be otherwise, and Celia knew it: yet somehow she felt a little disappointed—a trifle chilled.

The carriage went swiftly over the sandy roads, while Randolph talked to his betrothed in low, deep tones—talked of such things only as Parker, sitting on the box, might hear. They passed under dim trees, and through pigmy forests of underbrush, the cool gloom growing deeper and deeper. Celia listened almost in silence. An indefinable loneliness and a joyous, fluttering expectancy struggled within her. She was trying to adjust her consciousness to a sudden change in her surroundings. She felt she was more than the length of the longest railroad from Chelsea Village and Popper Leete's mid-day dinner.

"We didn't expect to have any one at the house except my cousins," she heard Randolph saying as her mind tried to picture the life that already seemed to have slipped far behind her; "but I've got an old college chum of mine

down here for a month or two—Jack Claggett. He's an artist, and he is doing some of the decorative work on the Coöperative Buildings. That is only one end of his cleverness. Claggett is going to be a great man some day. And then, just for to-night, we have old Jedby at dinner. He invited himself—he lives with his brother six or seven miles down the road—near Sag Harbor. He's a jolly old gossip, and used to be a friend of my father's. He's a sort of tame cat with us. But you'll see nobody else except my mother and the girls."

"The girls?" queried Celia.

"Yes, my cousins. And you've got to fall in love with them, you know. They're dear good girls. I've known them ever since they were little mites. We used to play together. Laura is uncommonly clever, and no end of fun. She's the eldest. Annette is the pretty one; but she isn't as bright as Laura. But mind, you must admire them both."

"I will if they will let me," said Celia meekly.

"Let you!" exclaimed her lover; "they will worship you—see if they don't!" And then, catching sight of Parker's back, he became silent.

They swung through a gateway in a long stone wall, and the wheels crashed up a gravelled

drive. Red windows flashed out through the trees, a flood of warm light came from a broad open door, and presently Celia was standing on the veranda, receiving a motherly kiss from Mrs. Wykoff, and furtively examining two tall, pretty, and very talkative girls who had a number of unimportant things to say with bird-like volubility.

"Parker will take you to your room, my dear," said Mrs. Wykoff; "and she will help you to change your dress, or you shall come to dinner just as you are, whichever pleases you. Are you tired? You *are* a little pale."

"I—I have a headache, I think," faltered Celia, truly enough, for the strong, sharp sea-air had struck hard on her nerves.

"You shall have your dinner in your own room," declared Mrs. Wykoff; but Celia would not consent. It was only the ghost of a headache, and it would go away itself.

She found it very awkward to be helped by Parker, and when Parker opened her trunk and took out the contents she watched Parker's eye with uneasiness in her soul. She might as well have tried to read the eye of the sphinx.

"Which dress, mum?" inquired her assistant.

"The gray one, I think," said Celia, naming the garment on which she placed her main

reliance, as being what women call "*always* nice." It was a dark gray silk, so made as to fall, to Celia's apprehension, just about at the vanishing point or horizon-line between the heaven of full dress and the lowly simplicity of work-a-day attire—a compromise gown, in fact. And truly, the modest square-cut corsage with pretty lace (the first real lace Celia had ever bought) at the neck was as proper garb as you shall see a pretty maid 'in.

But when Celia saw that gray dress come out of the trunk, the kindly current of her blood flew back to her heart's chill core. Down the front in an arabesque pattern, over the back in simulation of impossible festoons, nay, down the skirt in a mad cascade of color ran a ribbon of two shades of arsenical green, occasionally exhibiting a reverse side of pale yellow. Dorinda had done good by stealth, and had violated the sanctity of the trunk after it had been packed. Dorinda had always said that that dress lacked style.

"No, not that one," Celia said to the immovable Parker: "that is a—a mistake. There's a black silk dress there—I'll get it."

Celia blessed her mother's peculiar fancy, that was responsible for the existence of the black silk dress. "Mrs. Wykoff bein' in mournin'," Mrs. Leete had speculated, "she

might like to see you in black of a Sunday. It looks more considerate."

Ten minutes after the appearance of the black silk, Celia had begun to live her dream: she sat at her lover's table; whatever this life might be for which she had yearned, she was in the midst of it. She had wished a wish, and the wish had come true, as in a fairy tale.

A dream she thought it at first. She sank into her great leather chair with a pleasant sense of physical fatigue. She saw everything in the rosy dazzle of the crimson-shaded candles. She had a vague, diffused perception of luxurious comfort. The table spread before her, a glittering, snowy plain. She heard the murmur of gentle voices all about her; even the soft laughter was musical to her ears.

. It was only a moment of dreamy ecstasy. She lifted a spoonful of soup to her lips, and awoke herself to observe, to study, to learn. Eve ate of the fruit of knowledge, and the glories of uncomprehended Paradise began the slow process of resolving themselves into so much land and so much water, so many trees, so many shrubs, and so many spotted, speckled and striped birds and beasts and creeping things.

She sat at her hostess's right hand, and at the distant end of the table she saw Randolph,

and saw him for the first time in all the grandeur of what he would have called his "war paint." She accepted him as a revelation, and wondered whether she had ever sufficiently revered him. When Alonzo got into evening dress, he always looked as though he might break in the middle if he were carelessly handled. Nothing of this painful effect was observable in Randolph. To her right was Mr. Jedby, an ancient beau, who had begun to wax his moustache in the Presidency of the late Louis Napoleon, but whose juvenility was otherwise carefully conserved, save in the matter of his collar, which was as high as the prevailing style required, yet, in pattern, warped somewhat by memories of an older fashion. Mr. Jedby was pouring into the ear of Miss Laura Curtis a monotonous stream of gossip, confined between walls of elegant diction. Mr. Jedby rounded his sentences as though each one was to be taken down for publication in the "Autobiography of a Diner-Out," or the "Literary and Anecdotic Remains of Mr. Richard Jedby, edited with a preface by —."

The Lisles, Celia learnt, were at Vevey; the Oakleys at Bonn. Where the De la Hunts were he should know by the next European mail. (Mr. Jedby kept up a correspondence—a sort of gossip exchange—with all the idle

widows and busy old maids of his acquaintance. Yes, the Carroll party was in the Riviera, and they were talking, at last accounts, of a trip through the south of Italy and the Mediterranean Isles; but Mr. Jedby did not believe the plan would be carried out. Mortimer Faxon was with them, and Jack Ludlow's widow, and Mr. Jedby did not believe *she* would let *him* get too far from a legation.

"Opportunity, my dear young lady," said Mr. Jedby, "opportunity is elusive, and should be seized with promptitude and alacrity."

It was all a foreign language to Celia. Do you remember your first day at school, when you sat waiting for your assignment of lessons, and listened to the elder classes reciting Greek verbs? Some day, you knew, you would do the same thing; but what a world of unintelligibility lay before you!

Mr. Jedby had done no more than acknowledge his introduction to Miss Leete in the drawing-room, and he could not even pay attention to his dinner until he had made an end of his recital to Laura Curtis. Thus Celia was left to the ministrations of Mrs. Wykoff, who asked after each member of the Leete family in turn. Celia answered her almost mechanically, and quietly studied Mr. Claggett, opposite her.

She did not, perhaps, formulate the idea, but she felt that Mr. Claggett did not altogether harmonize with his surroundings. It was not only that he was tall, gaunt, and breezily Western in all his ways and manners; it was not only that he was a carelessly picturesque figure in a trim and decorous picture: in some way that she did not attempt to define he differed from the types about him. She was destined to receive more light upon the subject.

Claggett was, as Randolph Wykoff frequently had occasion to assert, a good fellow. He was also a promising young artist—in his friend's eye the most promising young artist of the day. Randolph had, like most young men of his serious and earnest temperament, a circle of youthful friends who were setting out to revolutionize everything in Art, Science, Literature, and Religion, and Claggett was the coming apostle of Art. But what Harvard College had done for Mr. Claggett and what Nature had done for him were two widely different things, and out of the conflict between Nature and Education came a side-issue unpleasant for Celia.

It happened that five or six wine-glasses by her plate and a number of courses presented to her in various styles and shapes somewhat puzzled this poor novice in the ways of the Golden World. She had been trying hard to recollect

what she had learned at boarding-school of the technicalities of the social board; but unfamiliar problems arrived, and some exhibition of hesitation or indecision attracted Mr. Claggett's attention. Now it was not many years since Mr. Claggett had wondered what terrapin might be, and had boggled at croquettes and bouchées. This fact ought to have made him charitable, and given him a kindly sympathy for others in such sad condition; but the experience had, in truth, embittered the young man. Why is the "tenderfoot" ill-treated in the far West? Because the "old settler" was a new settler but yesterday. The lust of torturing awoke in Claggett's breast.

The little confabs of two or three that began a dinner had broken up. Conversation crossed and criss-crossed the table. Mr. Claggett addressed himself to Miss Leete, and began to ply her with questions in gastronomy, designed for her confusion. What were her views on the cooking of terrapin? Did she agree with a Baltimore friend of his who thought that canvas-back duck should be cooked fifty seconds to the pound?

Mrs. Wykoff, talking across the board to Mr. Jedby, noticed nothing. The Curtis girls did notice, and made one or two ineffectual diversions in Celia's behalf. Randolph had

some notion that his friend was conversing in a strain foreign to the normal Claggett taste, and good-naturedly told him not to be absurd. But the baiting continued until Annette Curtis said under her breath—her face flushing hotly—“ Mr. Claggett ! ”

Claggett, like most people who have gone too far, went a little farther.

“ I was only trying to take a rise out of our young friend,” he explained, aside.

He lowered his voice as he spoke ; but Celia heard him, and the Curtis girls knew that she had heard. Probably no one else at the table would have known the significance of that piece of slang. But slang is a part of the modern girl's education, and Randolph's cousins were none the worse for recognizing the phrase and catching the rude allusion. They became Celia Leete's champions on the instant.

Celia's eye flashed, but she said nothing. Mr. Claggett looked at Miss Annette Curtis' face, and was silent. The dinner was ended in peace and calm.

The good old fashion prevailed in the Wykoff household, and the gentlemen had their hour of tobacco and chartreuse. In the drawing-room Annette sang a song or two, and when the men appeared, she and Randolph set themselves to sorting out piles of sheet-music.

Claggett, anxious to reëstablish himself, began a little monologue on farm-life in Wisconsin. He was a sharp observer of externals; and he told his tale with some cleverness, and he was really getting on very well when it occurred to him to inquire of Celia, with the best intentions in the world, but with an unfortunate inflection:

“Were you ever in the West, Miss Leete?”

“No,” said Celia; “we have too much of the West here, as it is.”

There was silence in that place for the space of a minute after this speech was uttered. An expression of puzzled surprise on Mr. Claggett’s features slowly lost itself in a broad smile; but there was no smile on any other face. Annette Curtis, at the piano, let her hands wander over the keys, struck a chord or two, and said:

“Ah! that’s it. Don’t you want to try that anthem over with me, Laura?—*la la la la—la la!*”

Late that night Mrs. Wykoff tapped at Celia’s door. Celia was sitting up, ripping the party-colored ribbon from her gray dress, and removing other superfluities, in conformity with suggestions gathered from her observation during the evening. She went guiltily to the door, and opened it half way.

“I saw the light in your room,” said Mrs. Wykoff, “and I was afraid you might be ill.”

"Oh, no," said Celia, very red and nervous, "I'm feeling much better—I think I'll go to bed now."

"I hope," Mrs. Wykoff continued, her brows contracted in an anxious way, "I hope you didn't mind—that Mr. Claggett did not say anything—anything that might——"

"Oh, no," Celia interrupted.

"He is peculiar. He is not exactly—Randolph is very fond of him, and he is a young man of many excellent qualities; but his sense of humor sometimes runs away with him, I'm afraid."

"I didn't mind him the least little bit," said Celia.

* * * * *

The next day there was tennis in the morning, at which Celia looked on; then a drive to the beach in the afternoon, and again Celia sat with Mrs. Wykoff and saw a quartette of athletes making merry. Randolph and Claggett and the two girls all swam until Celia shivered in wasted sympathy.

At twilight she took a little walk with Annette Curtis, and their walk brought them through a neighboring country place, a spacious old house, almost the mate of the Wykoff homestead.

"That is our place," said Annette, "or, a

least, it used to be, before papa—had troubles. We used to live here when Randolph was a little boy. I don't remember much about it, because I was the baby, you know ; but Laura and Randolph played together all the time. The neighbors used to call them 'the twins.' They're almost of an age—Randolph's just one week older. One day they went out in a boat together, and the boat struck a rock and sunk, and Randolph couldn't swim then, and Laura swam ashore with him. That's reversing the usual story, isn't it? And do you know he was so angry with her for being able to swim when he couldn't, that he wouldn't speak to her for ever so long?"

Thus began a summer of country life. One day was like another. Randolph was as affectionate in private, as delicately attentive in the presence of others as his sense of the proprieties of the situation permitted him to be. Celia's status was anomalous, yet she was not uncomfortable. Although her engagement to Randolph was never hinted at, she knew that all in the house were in the secret, and that their discretion was to be trusted. There were few visitors; Mr. Jedby made rare appearances, and if Mr. Jedby knew why she was under the Wykoff roof, he gave no sign.

Claggett alone enlivened the calm monotony

of Celia's days. He followed up his declaration of war with a series of attacks, in which he generally got fully the equivalent of what he gave. This warfare was carried on without the knowledge of Mrs. Wykoff. Both the combatants feared her disapprobation. Randolph, from his infinite height, saw something of it, and it annoyed him. But, in so far as it touched his own interests, he dismissed it with the reflection in which young men who are betrothed sometimes indulge themselves, that he would have to make some alterations in the character of his affianced, after the wedding. The Curtis girls saw and heard, and talked much between themselves.

And Randolph himself could not long remain in his position of uninterested superiority. There came an occasion when he was forced to see and act.

The young people were off for a day's sail, with an incidental crabbing expedition, in Randolph's cat-boat; and toward the end of the homeward trip Celia was out of temper.

She had come down to the boat in the morning attired in what she had purchased for a "sailor costume." There was much white braid about it, and a stiff little white collar, that later was limp. Then she had found the Curtis girls in old blue flannel gowns, with

water-stained silk handkerchiefs knotted loosely at their throats. Randolph had looked at her dress—put on for the first time—with as near an approach to frank surprise as he was capable of. Then she had been sea-sick, in a feeble, doubtful way, through all the outward sail. Then the crabbing came, to crush her with astonishment and disappointment. How could any one like such a disgusting employment? She sat in the dirty flat-bottomed boat they had hired of the neighboring fisherman; she was rowed about the glaring waters of a little cove; she gazed with abhorrence upon the squirming, uncanny crabs, the grinning fish-heads, the livid strings of soaked raw meat, and she marvelled how they could laugh and chatter and enjoy it all. She was glad Dorinda could not see her at the moment. “They” she thought—her “they” was the Wykoffs, this time, not her own family—“may be awfully swell, and we mayn’t be; but I know none of *us* would think this was *nice*.”

It was on the sail home that Celia exhibited the cumulative effect of these annoyances. A bushel-basket full of crabs had been spilt in the cockpit, and Claggett was restoring the scuttling wretches to their prison. Celia lay on the seat, trying not to be sea-sick. A fold of the white-braided dress hung down to the deck.

"*Do* keep those nasty things away from my skirt, Mr. Claggett!" she said, with asperity.

"Do not be too harsh with the crabs, Miss Leete," responded Claggett, unperturbed; "they are simple, humble, semi-marine creatures, and they have never seen a dress like that before. They merely wish to admire its gorgeousness. Give them a chance to make some approach to taste and fashion."

"Well," Celia returned, "they do seem to be getting away from *you* as hard as they can."

Randolph, who was at the tiller, heard this. A moment later he was called forward to the halliards, and he did not know that Celia, cheered up by her own triumph of witticism, forgot her qualms, and engaged merrily in a prolonged contest of wit with the young man from the West.

Randolph waited until he and Claggett were left to put the boat to rights for the night; and then he unburdened his mind.

"Look here, Jack," he said, kindly but firmly; "I wish you wouldn't talk to Miss Leete in the way you were talking down in the cock-pit. It's all very well, you know, between fellows, and at college, and all that sort of thing; but I think it's out of place with ladies."

"Has Miss Leete said anything to you

about it?" Claggett inquired, looking up quickly from his work.

"She has not."

"I thought not. You take things too seriously, old man. She likes it, and so would you, if you had any sense of humor. It's all pure fun and nonsense, and she's quite well able to take care of herself."

"I do not wish," said Randolph, coldly, "that Miss Leete should be obliged to take care of herself. I am the best judge in such matters; and I suppose that you understand the situation."

"No," said Claggett, standing up straight, and looking his friend in the eye: "I do *not* understand the situation."

"I am—" Randolph hesitated—"Miss Leete and I are engaged."

Unfortunately for Randolph, he could never rid himself of the idea that there was a special sanctity attaching to his private and personal affairs. When he was obliged to make even the most indirect mention of them, he assumed the tone which the boy at college tries to assume when you speak to him of his "secret society." It is the tone of stern, self-conscious dignity which some people take on in speaking of the unspeakable things of life. I knew one man, once upon a time, who used

this tone whenever he had occasion to talk of a cold in the head. The members of his family seemed to be peculiarly afflicted with this ailment; and, somehow, I got the idea that they were not "proper" people. Perhaps Mr. Claggett had similar associations with the peculiar tone, for he smiled in a way that greatly irritated Mr. Wykoff. And then he dealt a blow which left his friend paralyzed and dumb with inexpressible indignation.

"Well," Mr. Claggett said, "I don't know of any man more peculiarly fitted to make her unhappy."

He shouldered the sweeps, and walked off to the boat-house. Wykoff stood still for a minute, nearly, and his soul boiled within him. He wanted to do to Claggett many things which he could not do, under the social conditions of our age. Perhaps he came near to attempting some of them. But he checked himself. Instead, he walked for half an hour on the sands, and thought it all over. It may be that he communed with the spirit of his father, for a glimmering of John Wykoff's good sense visited his excited brain. He resolved to wreak no vengeance on the irreverent Claggett, but to establish for him a suitable "place" in the social scale; to put him there, and to keep him there. He carried out his

programme to the letter. He put Claggett in his "place" at once, and he kept him there. There was only one limitation to his satisfaction: Claggett never seemed to know what had happened to him.

* * * * *

Celia had accommodated herself to her surroundings—how thoroughly she did not know until a little thing set her to thinking.

Old habit led her to rise early, when only the servants were stirring. The mail of the previous night was brought in from the distant post-office early in the morning, and was spread out on a table in the hall. It was a week after her arrival that Celia came down and found a letter from Dorinda awaiting her—a letter in an envelope of pink, bordered with pale blue, stamped with a huge initial L, and scented. She snatched it up with an involuntary movement of concealment; checked herself, and then walked out into the clear sunshine with a guilty and troubled heart. Was she ashamed of her own people? Or was it only that she was rightly ashamed of her people's ways? Where was she drifting—where had she drifted? Had she turned her back on the little frame house in Chelsea Village? What lay before her here in the house of strangers?

* * * * *

Poor little Eve! she had to look around Paradise, and ask herself how she liked it. And she had to confess to herself that only as a mystery was it wholly delightful.

Personalities were not the staple of conversation in the Wykoff household; yet personalities there must be, and these were still Greek to Celia. And even in the employments of every day she found herself set apart from all the others. She tried to play tennis, and gave it up, after a little while. Her muscles were flaccid; her heart rebelled at the least strain; flushing and palpitating; she went to sit with Mrs. Wykoff, an uninterested spectator. It was the same at the afternoon swim—she could not overcome her dread of the pounding surf. She tried to walk with the Curtis girls, and three miles in an hour sent her to bed sore and tired. Indeed, she reflected, she had not come there to bat tennis-balls, to swim, to tramp over sandy roads. These things had no charm for her. Perhaps the pleasantest time of all the day was when she leaned back in Mrs. Wykoff's victoria and rolled gently through the streets of the village, when the summer boarders sat on the verandas and stared hard at the plump horses and the carriage.

In August the Curtis girls went to join their mother in the Catskills. Laura went to Celia's

room to bid her good-bye. She put her arms around Celia's neck. "Be good to him, my dear," she said.

* * * * *

It was a dull day after they went. Mrs. Wykoff seemed to be anxious and apprehensive. Randolph was grave. Claggett was moody and cynical. Celia showed depression of spirits in her dull silence.

"I wonder if Claggett annoys her in any way," Randolph said to his mother, who only shook her head.

He saw her grow more listless day by day; but he loyally waited for the appointed hour. When it came, he sought her out, and found her in a far corner of the old-fashioned garden.

"Celia," he said, "it is time to announce our engagement."

An hour later he walked into his mother's room, very pale, but collected, as became a Harvard man.

"It is all over, mother," he said; "and I am going away on Saturday. I think I shall go to California. I think I can do something there. I have an idea of providing proper homes for the farm-laborers."

He was John Wykoff's son, and there was no arguing with him. Mrs. Wykoff listened to

all he would tell her, and then went to find Celia. Celia was in her room, packing up her clothes in hysterical haste. Mrs. Wykoff took her in her arms.

"I can't help it," Celia sobbed; "I feel mean and wicked, but I can't do anything else. I *did* love him, and I *do* think he's the best man in the world—he's just as good and noble as he can be—but I couldn't be happy this way, Mrs. Wykoff! I don't like it—I couldn't get along at all. I've made a mistake—I've made a mistake right from the first; but I won't make any more mistakes, and I won't make his life miserable because I've spoiled my own. Oh, don't be so good to me, Mrs. Wykoff—I don't deserve it—I'm a wretched girl! Just let me go home—that's where I belong!"

Mrs. Wykoff was as gentle as only a wise, kindly, worldly woman can be. She soothed poor Celia, and made her understand that, for the sake of appearances, at least, she must outstay the broken-hearted philanthropist bound for California. Celia stayed. Randolph made his preparations and went, hopelessly gloomy, but punctiliously courteous and considerate to the last.

After a quick fortnight, Celia knocked at Mrs. Wykoff's room to say good-bye. She tried, with a full heart, to give some measure

of thanks for the kindness that was the one real thing to her in the world she was quitting. When she had made her timorous attempt, she blushed and trembled, and grew more timorous yet.

"There's something—you ought to know," she said, huskily; "I—I—I know it seems queer—but—but I couldn't help it. While Randolph—while Mr. Wykoff—while he was *here*, you know, I wouldn't listen to it; I wouldn't let him—I mean—I wouldn't have let anybody say anything to me, although we both—" Celia's voice was all but inaudible—"understood—how we felt. But now it's different, you know; and—and—Mrs. Wykoff, I'm not a wicked girl, but—I'm going to marry Mr. Claggett!"

CASPERL.

CASPERL was a wood-chopper, and the son of a wood-chopper, and although he was only eighteen when his father died, he was so strong and active, that he went on chopping and hauling wood for the whole neighborhood ; and people said he did it quite as well as his father, while he was certainly a great deal more pleasant in his manner and much more willing to oblige others.

It was a poor country, however, for it was right in the heart of the Black Forest, and there were more witches and fairies and goblins there than healthy human beings. So Casperl scarcely made a living, for all he worked hard and rose up early in the morning, summer and winter. His friends often advised him to go to some better place, where he could earn more money ; but he only shook his head and said that the place was good enough for him.

He never told any one, though, why he loved his poor hut in the depths of the dark

forest, because it was a secret which he did not wish to share with strangers. For he had discovered, a mile or two from his home, in the very blackest part of the woods, an enchanted mountain. It was a high mountain, covered with trees and rocks and thick, tangled undergrowth, except at the very top, where there stood a castle surrounded by smooth, green lawns and beautiful gardens, which were always kept in the neatest possible order, although no gardener was ever seen.

This enchanted mountain had been under a spell for nearly two hundred years. The lovely Princess who lived there had once ruled the whole country. But a powerful and wicked magician disguised himself as a prince, and made love to her. At first the Princess loved her false suitor; but one day she found out that he was not what he pretended to be, and she told him to leave her and never to come near her again.

"For you are not a prince," she said. "You are an impostor, and I will never wed any but a true prince."

"Very well," said the magician, in a rage. "You shall wait for your true prince, if there is such a thing as a true prince; and you shall marry no one till he comes."

And then the magician cast a spell upon the

beautiful castle on the top of the mountain, and the terrible forest sprang up about it. Rocks rose up out of the earth and piled themselves in great heaps among the tree-trunks. Saplings and brush and twisted, poisonous vines came to fill up every crack and crevice, so that no mortal man could possibly go to the summit, except by one path, which was purposely left clear. And in that path there was a gate that the strongest man could not open, it was so heavy. Farther up the mountain slope, the trunk of a tree lay right across the way,—a magic tree, that no one could climb over or crawl under or cut through. And beyond the gate and the tree was a dragon with green eyes that frightened away every man that looked at it.

And there the beautiful Princess was doomed to live until the True Prince should arrive and overcome these three obstacles.

Now, although none of the people in the forest, except Casperl, knew of the mountain or the Princess, the story had been told in many distant countries, and year after year young princes came from all parts of the earth to try to rescue the lovely captive and win her for a bride. But, one after the other, they all tried and failed,—the best of them could not so much as open the gate.

And so there the Princess remained, as the years went on. But she did not grow any older, or any less beautiful, for she was still waiting for the True Prince, and she believed that some day he would come.

This was what kept Casperl from leaving the Black Forest. He was sorry for the Princess, and he hoped some day to see her rescued and wedded to the True Prince.

Every evening, when his work was done, he would walk to the foot of the mountain, and sit down on a great stone, and look up to the top, where the Princess was walking in her garden. And as it was an enchanted mountain, he could see her clearly, although she was so far away. Yes, he could see her face as well as though she were close by him, and he thought it was truly the loveliest face in the world.

There he would sit and sadly watch the princes who tried to climb the hill. There was scarcely a day that some prince from a far country did not come to make the attempt. One after another, they would arrive with gorgeous trains of followers, mounted on fine horses, and dressed in costumes so magnificent that a plain cloth-of-gold suit looked shabby among them. They would look up to the mountain-top and see the Princess walking

there, and they would praise her beauty so warmly that Casperl, when he heard them, felt sure he was quite right in thinking her the loveliest woman in the world.

But every prince had to make the trial by himself. That was one of the conditions which the magician made when he laid the spell upon the castle; although Casperl did not know it.

And each prince would throw off his cloak, and shoulder a silver or gold-handled axe, and fasten his sword by his side, and set out to climb the hill, and open the gate, and cut through the fallen tree, and slay the dragon, and wed the Princess.

Up he would go, bright and hopeful, and tug away at the gate until he found that he could do nothing with it, and then he would plunge into the tangled thickets of underbrush, and try his best to fight his way through to the summit.

But every one of them came back, after a while, with his fine clothes torn and his soft skin scratched, all tired and disheartened and worn out. And then he would look spitefully up at the mountain, and say he didn't care so much about wedding the Princess, after all; that she was only a common enchanted princess, just like any other enchanted princess, and really not worth so much trouble.

This would grieve Casperl, for he couldn't help thinking that it was impossible that any other woman could be as lovely as *his* Princess. You see, he called her *his* Princess, because he took such an interest in her, and he didn't think there could be any harm in speaking of her in that way, just to himself. For he never supposed she could even know that there was such a humble creature as poor young Casperl, the wood-chopper, who sat at the foot of the hill and looked up at her.

And so the days went on, and the unlucky princes came and went, and Casperl watched them all. Sometimes he saw his Princess look down from over the castle parapets, and eagerly follow with her lovely eyes the struggles of some brave suitor through the thickets, until the poor Prince gave up the job in despair. Then she would look sad and turn away. But generally she paid no attention to the attempts that were made to reach her. That kind of thing had been going on so long that she was quite used to it.

By and by, one summer evening, as Casperl sat watching, there came a little prince with a small train of attendants. He was rather undersized for a prince; he didn't look strong, and he did look as though he slept too much in the morning and too little at night. He

slipped off his coat, however, and climbed up the road, and began to push and pull at the gate.

Casperl watched him carelessly for a while, and then, happening to look up, he saw that the Princess was gazing sadly down on the poor little Prince as he tugged and toiled.

And then a bold idea came to Casperl. Why shouldn't he help the Prince? He was young and strong; he had often thought that if he were a prince, a gate like that should not keep him away from the Princess. Why, indeed, should he not give his strength to help to free the Princess? And he felt a great pity for the poor little Prince, too.

So he walked modestly up the hill and offered his services to the Prince.

"Your Royal Highness," he said, "I am only a wood-chopper; but, if you please, I am a strong wood-chopper, and perhaps I can be of use to you."

"But why should you take the trouble to help me?" inquired the Prince. "What good will it do you?"

"Oh, well!" said Casperl, "it is helping the Princess, too, don't you know?"

"No, I don't know," said the Prince. "However, you may try what you can do. Here, put your shoulder to this end of the gate, and I will stand right behind you."

Now, Casperl did not know that it was forbidden to any suitor to have help in his attempt to climb the hill. The Prince knew it, though, but he said to himself, "When I am through with this wood-chopper I will dismiss him, and no one will know anything about it. I can never lift this gate by myself. I will let him do it for me, and thus I shall get the Princess, and he will be just as well satisfied, for he is only a wood-chopper."

So Casperl put his broad shoulder to the gate and pushed with all his might. It was very heavy, but after a while it began to move a little.

"Courage, your Royal Highness!" said Casperl. "We'll move it, after all." But if he had looked over his shoulder, he would have seen that the little Prince was not pushing at all, but that he had put on his cloak, and was standing idly by, laughing to himself at the way he was making a wood-chopper do his work for him.

After a long struggle, the gate gave way, and swung open just wide enough to let them through. It was a close squeeze for the Prince; but Casperl held the gate open until he slipped through.

"Dear me," said the Prince, "you're quite a strong fellow. You really were of some assist-

ance to me. Let me see, I think the stories say something about a tree, or some such thing, farther up the road. As you are a wood-chopper, and as you have your axe with you, perhaps you might walk up a bit and see if you can't make yourself useful."

Casperl was quite willing, for he began to feel that he was doing something for the Princess, and it pleased him to think that even a wood-chopper could do her a service.

So they walked up until they came to the tree. And then the Prince drew out his silver axe, and sharpened it carefully on the sole of his shoe, while Casperl picked up a stone and whetted his old iron axe, which was all he had.

"Now," said the Prince, "let's see what we can do."

But he really didn't do anything. It was Casperl who swung his axe and chopped hard at the magic tree. Every blow made the chips fly; but the wood grew instantly over every cut, just as though he had been cutting into water.

For a little while the Prince amused himself by trying first to climb over the tree, and then to crawl under it. But he soon found that, whichever way he went, the tree grew up or down so fast that he was shut off. Finally he gave it up, and went and lay down on his

back on the grass, and watched Casperl working.

And Casperl worked hard. The tree grew fast, but he chopped faster. His forehead was wet and his arms were tired, but he worked away and made the chips fly in a cloud. He was too busy to take the time to look over his shoulder, so he did not see the Prince lying on the grass. But every now and then he spoke cheerily, saying, "We'll do it, your Royal Highness!"

And he did it, in the end. After a long, long while, he got the better of the magic tree, for he chopped quicker than it could grow, and at last he had cut a gap right across the trunk.

The Prince jumped up from the grass and leaped nimbly through, and Casperl followed him slowly and sadly, for he was tired, and it began to occur to him that the Prince hadn't said anything about the Princess, which made him wonder if he were the True Prince, after all. "I'm afraid," he thought, "the Princess won't thank me if I bring her a prince who doesn't love her. And it really is very strange that this Prince has n't said a word about her."

So he ventured to remark, very meekly :

"Your Royal Highness will be glad to see the Princess."

"Oh, no doubt," said the Prince.

"And the Princess will be very glad to see your Royal Highness," went on Casperl.

"Oh, of course," said the Prince.

"And your Royal Highness will be very good to the Princess," said Casperl further, by way of a hint.

"I think," said the Prince, "that you are talking altogether too much about the Princess. I don't believe I need you any more. Perhaps you would better go home. I'm much obliged to you for your assistance. I can't reward you just now, but if you will come to see me after I have married the Princess, I may be able to do something for you."

Casperl turned away, somewhat disappointed, and was going down the hill, when the Prince called him back.

"Oh, by the way!" he said; "there's a dragon, I understand, a little farther on. Perhaps you'd like to come along and see me kill him?"

Casperl thought he would like to see the Prince do something for the Princess, so he followed meekly on. Very soon they came to the top of the mountain, and saw the green lawns and beautiful gardens of the enchanted castle,—and there was the dragon waiting for them.

The dragon reared itself on its dreadful tail,

and flapped its black wings; and its great green, shining, scaly body swelled and twisted, and it roared in a terrible way.

The little Prince drew his jewelled sword and walked slowly up to the monster. And then the great beast opened its red mouth and blew out one awful breath, that caught the Prince up as if he were a feather, and whisked him clear off the mountain and over the tops of the trees in the valley, and that was the last any one ever saw of him.

Then Casperl grasped his old axe and leaped forward to meet the dragon, never stopping to think how poor his weapon was. But all of a sudden the dragon vanished and disappeared and was gone, and there was no trace of it anywhere; but the beautiful Princess stood in its place, and smiled and held out her white hand to Casperl.

"My Prince!" she said, "so you have come at last!"

"I beg your gracious Highness's pardon," said Casperl; "but I am no Prince."

"Oh, yes, you are," said the Princess; "how did you come here, if you are not my True Prince? Didn't you come through the gate and across the tree, and haven't you driven the dragon away?"

"I only helped—" began Casperl.

"You did it all," said the Princess, "for I saw you. Please don't contradict a lady."

"But I don't see how I could—" Casperl began again.

"People who are helping others," said the Princess, "often have a strength beyond their own. But perhaps you didn't come here to help me, after all?"

"Oh, your gracious Highness," cried Casperl, "there's nothing I wouldn't do to help you. But I'm sure I'm not a Prince."

"And I am sure you are," said the Princess, and she led him to a fountain near by, and when he looked at his reflection in the water, he saw that he was dressed more magnificently than any prince who ever yet had come to the enchanted mountain.

And just then the wedding-bells began to ring, and that is all I know of the fairy story, for Casperl and the Princess lived so happily ever after in the castle on top of the mountain that they never came down to tell the rest of it.

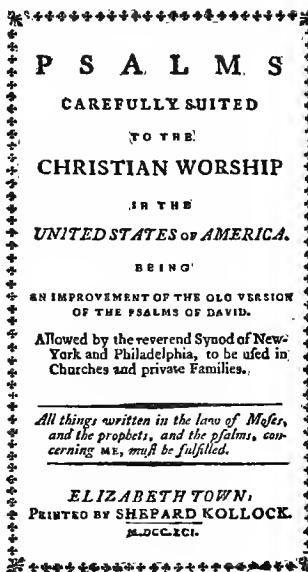
A SECOND-HAND STORY.

I HAVE a small book, and a small story, that I bought, the two together, for fifteen cents. He thought, I suppose, that he was selling the book alone; and I must admit that it was but a shabby sort of book. You will hardly find it in the catalogues. It is not a first edition. It is not a tall copy—it is a squat little volume, in truth. It bears a modest *imprimatur*.

The title-page reads thus:

“Oh, I don’t know,” said the bookseller, as I leaned over the “second-hand counter,” and held it up to him.

“Fifteen cents, if you want it. Now, *here’s* something you ought to see——”



But I did not care to see it. I took my fifteen cents' worth away, and asked myself in what Elizabethtown it was printed; what manner of man Shepard Kollock might have been; but most, what human being owned this little book, handled it, read it, sang from it—belonged to it," in short, as we all belong to our books.

I am told that to the man who has determined to hand his conscience over to the keeping of an established church this much liberty of personal choice is conceded: that he may elect to which one of the established churches he will make delivery. Of this initial liberty of personal choice I shall take advantage in my search after truth. To discover the true history of this volume, I must accept certain premises, and draw conclusions therefrom. If the

conclusions are wrong, the premises are clearly to blame, and I am not.

Now, I find, on the second page, behind the title, this official commission of the book:

Philadelphia, May 24th, 1787.

THE Synod of New-York and Philadelphia did allow Dr. Watts's Imitation of David's Psalms, as revised by Mr. Barlow, to be sung in the Churches and Families under their care.

Extracted from the records of Synod, by

GEORGE DUFFIELD, D. D.
Stated Clerk of Synod.

Hence we may set out

with the almost certain knowledge that this copy of Mr. Barlow's revision was owned in Pennsylvania, in New York, or in New Jersey, tucked away between them. If the owner were a Pennsylvanian, why did the book not drift, in the end, to Philadelphia instead of to New York?—there are book-shops in Philadelphia, I think. I found it in New York, yet I hardly think it was first sold there. Dr. Watts must have been tongueless among the Dutch churches in 1791, and he could hardly have been made welcome among the modish Church-of-England sinners in Trinity or St. John's. It was in New Jersey, then, that she lived—for I have decided that this book was owned by a woman and that her name was Prudence—in New Jersey, perhaps on some rich lowland along the calm Passaic.

I have a fancy that I know the place. It is a small town, set between the river and the softly rising hills that slope and fall and slope and fall to the feet of the Orange Mountains. Half-way up the long main street lies a little triangle of green, bounded by posts and chains, that is called "the square." The church stands on the highest side, a solid building of reddish-brown stone, with plain rectangular windows, that look blankly out

from their many panes of pale green flint glass. It has a squat wooden spire, painted white—a white that has been softened and made pleasant to the eye by the ministrations of the weather. Directly opposite the church is a large square house of brick, with stone about the doors and windows, and with a little white-painted Grecian portico—on that the paint is ever white and new, defying the kindly hand of time. That is the Squire's house, and that is where Prudence lives.

There are trees all around the square, and trees in it—chestnuts and graceful beeches and young oaks—trees that seem to bring something of the wood into the heart of the town. You will not see the great drooping arbors of the New England elms, set at regular intervals, massive, shapely, and urban. These are children of the forest, not afraid to venture into the little town and to scatter themselves about her grassy streets.

Their boughs, that wave in the sunlight, are almost the only things that move, early of a summer Sunday morning. The front doors are closed that of a week-day open wide their broad upper halves. There are no people in the streets. Everybody is within doors, making ready for church. Even the dogs refrain

from running about the highways and byways on the aimless errands which dogs affect ; they lie in the sun on the doorsteps and wait the appearance of that human world of which they are but a humble auxiliary. Perhaps Prudence, pinning her neckerchief before her dressing glass, gives a look through her window—hers is the little room over the front door—the window with the fan-light at the top—and smiles to see the sunshine and the billowing leaves flickering red and green ; but she is the only woman in the town who has a thought to give to anything save the great business of Sunday morning tiring.

At last the old sexton stalks across the square, and opens the church doors with his huge iron key. Out of the sunlight he vanishes into the black hollow of the vestibule ; there is silence for a moment, then the husky whir of the rope over the wooden wheel on high, and the bell clangs out brazen and loud, and the startled birds rise for a second above the tree-tops, and Sunday life begins.

You will not see Prudence until all the townspeople and the farmers from the country round about are seated in the pews—not until the Dominie appears at the side door of the church. Then the broad portal of the Squire's

house springs open and the Squire marches forth, looking larger than ever in his Sunday black. There is a sombre grandeur about the very silk stockings on his sturdy old legs. Behind him comes Cæsar—black Cæsar—his wool as white as the Squire's powdered wig. Cæsar has his kit in his hand ; he plays the first fiddle in the choir, and thereby enjoys a proud eminence above all the other negroes in the neighborhood. Moreover, he has been a freeman since the first squire died.

Prudence walks by her father's side. The white neckerchief is folded over her breast ; her dress is gray ; her eyes are gray and dove-like. She holds her hymn-book and a spray of caraway in one hand ; the other lifts her clinging skirt. The Squire looks straight ahead as he walks, and Cæsar looks straight at the Squire's back. But Prudence's soft eyes wander a little. Perhaps she is not sorry that the Squire walks slowly ; that she has these few moments under the trees and among the birds before the great bare hollow of the church swallows her up for the two long hours of service.

As Prudence sits in her pew to-day—the front pew to the left of the aisle as you face the Dominie—she is conscious that there is

among the worshippers a concentration of furtive attention upon the pew behind her—the one where old Jan Onderdonck used to sit until he went to finish his mortal slumbers in the graveyard. She does not wonder who may be there ; she is too good a girl for that. But she cannot help remembering that she will know when church is out. And now she rises to sing in the hymn, and—she must have been wondering, in spite of herself, or why is there such a guilty start and thrill under the white neckerchief when she hears the strong barytone voice rise resonant behind her? The little brown hymn-book trembles in her hands ; she knows she is a wicked girl, and yet—perhaps it is part of her wickedness that she cannot feel properly unhappy. Nay, she knows there is a jubilant lilt in her voice as it joins the strange voice and sings :

“ Happy the heart where graces reign,
Where love inspires the breast ;
Love is the brightest of the train,
And strengthens all the rest.”

Her father turned half around where he stood, as a pillar of the church turning on its base, and gazed at the stranger. Prudence could not turn ; she could only glance shyly at her father. He had his Sunday face on,

and she knew that he would not relax a muscle of it until he had shaken hands with the Dominie in the porch.

I do not know what else Prudence sang that day out of the brown hymn-book. Perhaps it was "*The Shortness and Misery of Life*," or "*The World's Three Chief Temptations*," or "*Corrupt Nature from Adam*," or "*The Song of Zacharias, and the Message of John the Baptist*;" but I do know that, as she was going out of church, Prudence did something she had never done since, ten years before, her father put her dead mother's hymn-book into her small hand and told her it was hers. She left it lying on the seat behind her. It did not lie there long; she was not two steps down the aisle before the tall, broad-shouldered young man in the pew behind had presented it to her with a low bow. She took it with a frightened courtesy, and went down the aisle, her heart beating hard. Indeed, now, there was no doubt about it. She was sinful, perverse, and wholly unregenerate to the last degree. She wondered if iniquity so possessed other girls. And just in that moment when he bowed she had noticed that he had fine eyes, and that he wore his black clothes with an air of distinction. Of what use was it to

go to church at all, if such sinfulness was ingrained in her?

* * * * *

The disturbed dust was settling down on the pulpit cushion once more. The Dominie and the Squire stood in front of the church. The Dominie was powdering himself with snuff, as he always did after a hard sermon, and waiting for his regular invitation to dinner. The Squire, however, was not as prompt as usual to-day. His eyes followed a broad-shouldered figure in black clothes of foreign cut, that strolled idly through the square.

“Dr. Kuypers,” he finally demanded, “who is that young man?”

“That,” said the Dominie, as he put his snuff-box in his pocket, “is Rick Onderdonck, or, I might better say, Master Richard Onderdonck, the son of our old friend Jan Onderdonck, now at rest. He has been these four years in Germany, where he has learnt a pretty deal of Latin, I must say for him.”

The Squire shook his head.

“A godless country for a boy,” he said. “I hope he got no worse than Latin there.”

“Nay, nay,” said the Dominie, indulgently; “I find him a good youth, and uncorrupted. He came home but yesterday, and stays with me till his father’s house shall be aired. He

will work the old farm, he says, and I trust his Latin may do him no harm."

Dr. Kuypers and the Squire bowed with solemn courtesy. "I shall be honored with your company at dinner, and with that of Mr. Onderdonck." Then he dropped to a simple week-day tone: "Four years, Dominie, four years, is it, since you and I and Jan Onderdonck sat at dinner together? Yes, bring the lad."

And Prudence, during this conversation, stood at her father's elbow and said nothing at all, as was decorous in a young girl.

Dr. Kuypers was a terrible man in the pulpit, and a kind-hearted and merry man out of it. The Sunday dinners in the great brick house were always the brighter for his coming; and if this dinner seemed to Prudence the brightest she had ever known, the credit must have been due to Dr. Kuypers, for young Mr. Onderdonck was certainly most quiet and modest, and contented himself for the most part with giving fitting and well-considered answers to the questions of the elder gentlemen as to his studies and the state of Europe.

The dinner came to an end long before Prudence wished it. And yet, at the end, there was a new and delightful experience for her, which she fled to her room to dream over.

She was only nineteen; she sat at the head of the table, but it was only as she had sat since she was a little girl, just learning to pour her father's coffee, and she had always been a little girl to the Squire and the Dominie. But to-day, when she rose from her seat, Mr. Onderdonck rose too, and hurried to open the door for her, and bowed low as she went out—and, O wondrous day!—as if this were not joy enough, she saw over her shoulder that her father and the Dominie rose too, and stood until the door had closed behind her.

Mr. Rick Onderdonck was modest even after Mistress Prudence had left the room. I think that the deference of young men toward their elders will not die out in this world while old men have fair daughters. Mr. Onderdonck took his portion of post-prandial Schnapps, and patiently let the Squire and the Dominie whet their rusty Latin on his brand-new learning.

* * * * *

Of course, Prudence married Rick Onderdonck. That was written from the beginning. Why should it not be so? What had the Squire to say against the pretensions of young Rick Onderdonck, heritor of all the square miles of green upland that had once belonged

to old Jan, owner of seventy slaves, a virtuous and a comely man, with very pretty manners in the presence of his elders? Why, nothing. He might, indeed, have said that the house would be lonelier than he had thought without Prudence silently flitting here and there; but it was not the Squire's way to give such reasons as that: and so the young people were betrothed early in the spring that followed that first winter when the neighborhood remarked that Rick Onderdonck had taken to going to the Squire's house more than his father ever did.

I don't think the hymn-book saw much of their courtship, although, to be sure, Mr. Onderdonck probably went to church quite regularly during that period of probation. But she sang in the pew in front and he in the pew behind her, and the most that the hymn-book could know of what either of them felt was that her fingers tightened on its smooth cover whenever she heard his voice.

But she probably confided some thoughts of her heart to the little book that had been her mother's when she came to pack up her "things" a day or two before the wedding—I mean her personal belongings—the trifles dear to her heart.

For days the ox-carts had creaked and

groaned up the rough hill roads to the Onderdonck farm-house, leaving great loads of tables, and chairs, and wardrobes, and chests of drawers, and corded boxes that held hundreds of yards of sweet-clover scented linen, and dresses made by modish seamstresses in New York, and even liberal gifts from the Squire's store of family silver. But besides such things as these, there is always the pitiful little kit that a girl makes up when she leaves the old home-roof and takes ship on the great sea of wifehood.

This was truly a kit, done up in the red bandanna handkerchief that old Susan, her nurse (Cæsar's wife, in her lifetime), had given her long ago. For that matter, all the poor treasures had been given to her. There was this little hymn-book, first of all, and the gold chain and locket with her mother's miniature. Prudence sometimes looked at her mother's portrait and wondered if those gentle blue eyes had not looked frightened when the Squire proposed to marry them. Then there were the emery-bag and scissors she had got at school, for working the neatest sampler, and there was the sampler to speak for itself. There was the ivory ship that Ezra Saunders had carved for her—Ezra, the dry, shrivelled old cobbler, from some strange, far place in New England,

who had followed the sea in his younger days, and whose dark back room in the cabin by the river-side was hung with sharks' teeth and sword-fish spears, and ingeniously carved stay-bones, with a smell of sandal-wood about them all, wrapping north and south and east and west in one atmosphere of spicy oriental mystery. There, too, was her collection of trinkets—an enamelled broach, a tall tortoise-shell comb, a garnet ring or two, and such modest odds and ends as served her for jewellery. And all of these she did up in the red bandanna handkerchief, with a guilty feeling, as though she were deserting her girlish life after an ungrateful fashion, and maybe the brown book was sensible of some poor unformulated prayers for the strange future.

And so it came about—for the contents of the handkerchief went up to her new home the day before the wedding—that the hymn-book was not in church when she was married. If it had been, I think it would have lain open at page 271, as old Cæsar's bow slid softly over the strings, and the congregation sang:

“ Thy wife shall be a fruitful vine,
Thy children, round thy board,
Each, like a plant of honor, shine,
And learn to fear the Lord.”

* * * * *

So now we have the brown hymn-book at home in the Onderdonck homestead, a long, low building, the lower story of red stone, the upper of wood. It stood high up on the hills, and looked down over grassy slopes of meadowland across the tops of the trees in the town, to the clear, shining line of the river, that ran in pleasant curves as far as the eye could follow it.

It is here that Prudence begins and ends her life. For the best of life begins where she began in the old farm-house, and what end the world saw she made there.

There life's new joys and life's new troubles began: the new joy of two living one life together; and then the great and awful trouble of child-birth—the worst forgotten, however, as she lay in Grandmother Onderdonck's four-poster bed and heard the sharp, small, querulous wailing from the next room. I think that was of a Saturday morning in May, and I am sure that on the Sunday she sent Rick to church to receive the congratulations of the neighborhood, and lay in her bed the while, and perhaps turned over a page or two of the hymn-book, finding a comfort in its terror-fraught pages which our generation might seek in vain. Then old Mother Sturt, who brought all the town's babies into the world, took the

book away from her, for fear it might hurt her dear eyes ; and she lay there and hummed the familiar airs under her breath, and if the tune was sweet to her memory it mattered little though the words ran :

“ Should'st thou condemn my soul to hell,
And crush my flesh to dust,
Heav'n would approve thy vengeance well,
And earth must own it just.”

The time went slowly, lying there in the white waste of the four-poster bed ; but it came to an end in time, and there was a day when she went up the church aisle on her husband's arm, just after the sermon, and Dominie Kuypers sprinkled water on the head of the infant, conceived in sin and born in iniquity, and totally unconscious of it, the while the choir sang :

“ Thus Lydia sanctified her house,
When she received the word ;
Thus the believing jailer gave
His household to the Lord.”

There were other children after that boy, and Prudence found her days well filled up with the little duties of a woman's life—those little duties which would distress women less could they but see the grand total and estimate the value of it. Prudence must have had some blessed comprehension of the worth

of a woman's work who does her duty as wife and mother, for I can see her going about her daily tasks with a sweet and placid face, and lifting tender welcoming eyes to her husband as he comes home at sunset from some far corner of the farm—those sweet gray eyes that were content, only a little while ago, with the light of the sun on the trees and the gay face of the summer-clad world.

It was a serious face, sometimes, that met her look, for Rick was a man who took on his broad shoulders some share of the world's burdens beyond his necessary stint. They had a troublous time when they made up their minds to let their slaves work out their freedom. It was some years before Rick regained his popularity among the neighbors; he had practically manumitted his entire holding of slaves, and although such an act might have been forgiven to mere benevolence, it was a crime against the community when it was dictated by principle. Rick had a sad scene with the old Squire, who all but cursed him for his foreign atheistical notions; and even good Dominie Kuypers looked gravely disappointed. They did not, in fact, fully restore Rick to favor until it became clear beyond a doubt that the farm was paying better under a system of free labor than it had ever paid

while it supported a horde of irresponsible slaves. When that fact was proved beyond a doubt, the most notoriously mean man in the county ordered his slaves to work out their freedom at the highest market-price; and, after that, the curse was taken off Rick and Prudence.

* * * * *

The shutters of the old farm-house are closed. The broad spread of fields is empty of all but waving grain and nodding corn. The farm-hands stand about the kitchen door, looking strange in their Sunday clothes of black. At the front door stands young Jan Onderdonck, a shapely boy of eighteen, looking out on the world with that white, blank face which the first sight of death among his own puts on a boy. He meets the neighbors as they drive up to the gate in swaying carryalls or lumbering wagons, and goes silently before them to the door. They go in, out of the clear, summer sunshine, leaving the slope of long, unmown grass, the beds of bright flowers, the tremulous green beeches behind them, into the dim, cool front sitting-room, and range themselves along the wall. Friend bows to friend, in a constrained fashion, and here and there are hushed interchanges of speech. "She is taking it hard, poor soul," they say; "but so

quiet and still, the doctor was frightened for her."

Across the hall he lies, in the room opened only for company. The air is close; the shutters will not let the scent of the rose-bushes enter. His calm face looks up to the cracked, whitewashed ceiling of the plain old house that was his home a few hours ago. How calm it is! How calm, to leave behind such a void, so much and so unconquerable grief! Yet, would we have the shadow and impress of our sorrow on his face? Good man, good husband, good father, he is gone. And this poor face that lies here to tell us of him, let us be thankful that it smiles calmly as our poor bewildered eyes look at it for the last time.

The darkest room in all the dim, closed house is where Prudence sits, on the floor above. There is a child at each side of her, and when her hands are not clasped trembling in her lap, they move to touch the soft, tear-wet faces. And now the eldest son comes softly into the room and slips his arm about her, and a quick tremor shakes her, and she hears the voice of the old minister, standing upon the stairs, midway between the dead and the living half of one existence, speaking the words that part husband and wife upon this

earth. There is a silence, and then the voices of the singers come with a far-away sound from the rooms below. One of the children, with a child's poor, helpless effort to serve, slips the book into her hands. She cannot open it ; she could not see the page ; she does not need it. She knows the words ; only two lines come new to her ears—" Nor should we wish the hours more slow, to keep us from our love."

* * * * *

It has been dropping light showers all the afternoon ; showers that have caught the first swaths of the cut grass. Then there has been the brief glow of a high-hung rainbow, and the warm sun has come to rest a few minutes on the long heaps of grass, and to distil from them an exquisite attar of new-mown hay. The sun is behind the hills now ; the front of the old farm-house where Prudence is sitting in shade. She looks across her flower-beds, down the long slope to where, beyond town and trees, there is still a warm light on the winding Passaic, that goes, presently, creeping up the farther hills, and last of all resting on the white houses of a little settlement that perched on those hills—how many years ago ? Prudence forgets : many years ago, yet long since the one date from which she reckons all

her days. Rick never saw it. The woods were there when he died.

For thirty years Prudence has seen the sun rise and set since he died. Thirty summers she has tended the garden he dug for her in their honeymoon. The house he left empty is still home to her, to his children, and to his children's children. The fires have long gone out in the house where she was born; she looks now over the smokeless chimney; but his home is still as he would wish to find it were he coming home this evening across the sweet fields.

Prudence, sitting there, sees his grandson coming homeward now. She knows the broad shoulders and the springy gait. She has always called the boy Richard, though every one else calls him Rick. She knows, too, the girlish figure by his side; she knows that he will go past the gate and through the woods to the Van Vorst farm. Yes, on he goes, bending his tall head to talk with Mary Van Vorst.

Prudence's face is sweet and her eyes are patient; but who shall blame her if the longing of her heart springs up and knows not day or years? What days or years shall touch that immortal youth? Has the summer grown old? Has the green of the world grown dull,

and the gold of the sun grown dim? He walked with her then, and the hay smelt as it smells to-day; the twilight air grew tender and misty about them, the murmur of woodland life made the cool darkness shrill, and the young stars came out in the vague blue of the sky.

What has grown old? What is changed in her heart that it should not cry out for love and joy? Why may she not feel his strong arm about her shoulders, hear his voice in her ears? Why may she not look up now and see his face bent over hers, love speaking to love in their eyes?

A small brown book slips from her hand and falls upon the ground; but she does not need the printed page. She knows the hymn by heart. The bassoon and the fiddle play softly in the choir of the old church; she hears them faintly, for her heart is fluttering; her hands are cold, there is a mist of tears in her eyes as she looks up into her husband's face, standing before the altar.

It must have been on some evening such as this that the little book dropped from Prudence's hands for the last time. For unless it fell there, and lay among the flowers, and the flowers were untended after her death, so that some stranger picked it up and

took it away as a thing of no account, I cannot tell why her children let their mother's book find its way to a second-hand book-shop. I am glad that in the end it did not fall into the hands of some one who might not have known her story.

MRS. TOM'S SPREE.

THERE was high carnival held in Northoak one breezy August day some twenty odd years ago, in a time when the weather seems to me, as I look back on it, much more genially bracing and inspiriting than the weather we have nowadays. I am sure of one thing: we have no better days now than that day, none when the breeze blows more briskly, cool, and soft than it blew that day up and down the rolling hillsides of Northoak, fluttering bright ribbons along every road and path.

It had been a carnival summer for Northoak—though, to be sure, the revellers had very little thought that they were bidding farewell to the delights of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and were much astounded when the penitential day arrived. And on that August morning it was far enough off yet, and all they had to do was to be gay.

Now, Northoak had never been gay before. Contented, happy, and well-to-do it had always

been ; but it reached its high-water mark of festivity each year with the regular annual lawn-party (called a *fête champêtre* by those who were wise in such things), which each family among the landed gentry took its turn at giving. One year it was the Westfields, another year the Lydeckers, the next the Turners, and this year perhaps the Brinckerhoffs. But it was always pretty much the same lawn-party ; and while it was sure to be correct, decorous, discreetly liberal in material gratifications, and possibly enjoyable, it could not fairly—it would not if it could—have been called gay.

The gayety of that long-ago summer came to Northoak from outside, and was rather in Northoak than of it. And perhaps its character, as well as its relation to Northoak life, may be summed up in the statement that it was hotel gayety.

For the curse of the summer hotel had come upon Northoak, and Northoak had received it with dignified submission, accepting it perhaps as a punishment for the sins of well-bred pride and polite self-complacency.

The place had always been well satisfied with itself. The little village had been satisfied to be a little village, with a few small shops bidding lazily for the custom of the people on the “estates.” The estates certainly

could look contentedly down from their uplands and rejoice in their well-cultivated acres and in their substantial houses.

These houses—the older ones, at least—were dwellings of an interesting and significant type, much in favor in northern New York. Their pattern is best described by saying that they had their front door at the back. The front must surely have been the end with the great Doric portico looking out on the lawn. Yet you entered at the other end, and found a broad hall, perhaps with two reception-rooms. If the reception-rooms were there, you went into one or the other before you were announced in the large drawing-room beyond the hall. And if you were there to sell rose-bushes, or to collect money for the heathen, or to take orders for wine, the host came to you in the room on the right. But if you were there to make a call, the hostess came and led you forth from the room on the left to the grander chamber that looked out upon the lawn.

You may gather from this that Northoak had an aristocracy and something of a feudal system. It had both, and they were curiously well developed and firmly established for a downright rural community. This maintenance of an old-world social system in a democratic new-world was characteristic of the elder

and larger towns of the State. It existed here because Northoak was originally a settlement of what are called retired business men, who rented their New York houses and gardens seventy-five or eighty years ago and turned themselves into country gentlemen. Their grandsons still collected rent for the same property, only they leased factories and warehouses ; and they spent thousands where their grandfathers had spent hundreds, to live just about as their grandfathers had lived.

This state of affairs may seem most iniquitous to some, but I can testify that when I first went to Northoak, toward the end of my boyhood, Northoak great and Northoak small were well pleased with themselves and with each other, and that the stranger soon became sincerely attached to both.

I was but a summer boarder in the village ; but summer boarders were rare birds in those days, and if they were birds of any sort of social plumage they were courteously entreated and well fed by the hospitable folk of the estates. It was in Northoak that I wore my first dress-coat to my first grand dinner, and I remember just how proud and just how uncomfortable I was. I would have died for the aristocracy that night—died conscious of my tails, but loyal.

But, if the village had sinned, retribution had come upon it. For the third time I came to Northoak in June, and lo! the village did not know itself, and indeed was no more a village, but a nameless suburb of a summer hotel.

Some sordid scout of the capitalists had found out what we of the elect few had found out long before—that Northoak was pretty and healthful. And so he desecrated Northoak in giving it over to the populace. Now the great hotel stood there, glaring in its paint of reddish-yellow and reddish-brown, and ten splendid elms had been done to death that it might rear its hideous mansard-roof above its three-storied veranda. Inside of it there were white kalsomined bedrooms, a great “general office,” and a greater dining-room, with frescoed ceilings and gorgeous fittings of black walnut and gilt, in the taste of what has been aptly called “the Jim Fisk era.” Then there were “French bronze” chandeliers that were neither French nor bronze, puffed upholstery of blue and yellow satin, carpets where gigantic flowers spread luxuriously over a white ground, walls covered with velvet paper—the hotel had every attraction that went to make up elegance and completeness in those happy days when we knew no better.

The elegance had spread to the poor little

village. The grocery was an emporium ; the thread-and-needle shop was a bazar—with only two *a*'s. The honest old village inn was gone, with its innocent " Philadelphia and XXX ales," and in its place was a gaudily painted frame building, of which the first floor was a sample-room. Above the sample-room, reached by a side stairway, was a mysterious apartment into which men entered at all hours of the night, and whence they emerged, as a rule, at about five or six in the morning. The unceasing click of the roulette-ball, clearly audible on the street below, announced that a " quiet little game " was going on in the " club-house."

These things changed the face of the town, but the people brought a greater change. It was an early year in that series of years which linked the close of the war to the panic of 1873—a year, like its fellows, of general extravagance and ostentation. Thousands of people were rich who had never expected to be. Shoddy had stood the good fairy to some of them ; others had found wealth in government contracts, in stock speculation, in the spouting of petroleum wells. Now, when each of these suddenly acknowledged children of wealth had built his grand house, furnished and pictured it, so to speak, and had made his trip to Paris and seen something of the glory of the third Napo-

leon and Baron Haussmann, he had made up his mind to live luxuriously, and had to face the problem of ways and means. Luxury there was to be had, but it was such luxury as ministered to the quiet, conservative, and strictly private and esoteric pleasures of a limited and exclusive class. The new-made millionaire wanted something that showed for more in the shop-window. He found plenty of people to aid him in his search. The summer hotel sprang into existence to relieve him of all trouble for three months in the year. The Parisian *opéra bouffe* and the British burlesque came across the ocean to give a tone of sophisticated frivolity to the freshly formed society in which he found himself. He accustomed his palate to the taste of champagne. It was not long before his highest ethical aspirations were satisfied.

And here he was, holding high carnival in dazzled Northoak. He had brought his train with him. There were people from Keokuk and Peoria, people from Cynthiana, from Omaha, from San Francisco, from Petrolia, and from Des Moines. "Why, my dear," said one scandalized old lady of Northoak, "I really never supposed there *were* such places, except on the map, you know." There were gentlemen in velvet smoking-jackets, gentlemen in

baggy knickerbockers, gentlemen with long blond whiskers, and gentlemen who affected smoking-caps. There were ladies in silks and ladies in satin, and a great many of them cultivated a supposed resemblance to the Empress Eugénie, while still more were modelled upon the pattern of the "girl of the period." It was what was known as a "fast crowd," and about the most of its members there was nothing worse than the exuberant folly born of sudden luxury. They were gay birds of opulence, and they wanted to spread their wings and toss and tumble in the soft summer air. And if some birds of prey slipped in among them, who was to blame? The hotel-keepers of the day were not so wise in the matter of feathers as our experienced landlords of this present year of grace.

* * * * *

On this August day of which I speak, the hotellites had some merrymaking afoot which awakened interest even among the people of the estates. Between the large contingent from the West and Southwest, and the minority from the Eastern and Middle States, there was a certain rivalry in all things, and each side had its leaders and champions. Two of these rivals (among the younger sets) were Jack Mowatt of New York, and Clayton Adri-

ance of Kentucky. These young men danced equally well, they played about the same game of billiards, each was past-master at croquet, and each could

" Urge toward the table's centre,
With unerring hand, the squail."

(Squails and croquet! O gilded youth, shall aureate adolescence of 1910 smile thus at your tennis; at your exceeding skill with a little foolish round puzzle which has amused you much of late?) In these accomplishments there was nothing to choose between them; but in the matter of horsemanship, it seemed, they were unwilling to divide honors.

Other young men there were, also, who challenged their supremacy. To-day, therefore, a race, a wonderful race of twenty miles, was to be run, in four-mile heats, on the track of the old county-fair grounds. It was an absurd contest—cruel on the country horses which had to be hired to supply four out of the five relays for each rider, and it was no fair test of the horsemanship of the two youths. Adriance was beyond doubt the more skilful and graceful horseman; but in a match like this he stood small chance against the superior wind and strength of his lithe, wiry, deep-chested antagonist, who had pulled in three college races, and who outclassed him in size and weight.

However, it was an opportunity for fun, for excitement, for showing of pretty gowns, betting of gloves and champagne and bon-bons and cigars. The hotellites turned out, one and all. Their landaulets and barouches and pony phaetons whirled pretty girls along the dusty highways, and all the primary colors flashed in the sun. Even the hill people came. A horse-race aroused every true American among them.

I trudged along the road, happy enough, yet longing for an invitation to ride beside the least of those pretty girls. I knew the hotel people, after a fashion; I was kindly permitted to hang on the outer edge of their grandeur. Jack Mowatt, who was always good-hearted, now and then deigned to patronize me—I was only three years his junior. I even had a love-affair, if I am not mistaken, with the youngest daughter of a family of eight girls. She was waiting for her two elder sisters to marry, and she condescendingly practised upon me while she waited for her mother to bring her out. But none of my new friends bade me mount with them. It was the good old aristocracy that took pity upon me. Tom Turner's dull, creaky voice hailed me:

“Hi, young man! going to the race?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Jump in!”

Mr. Tom Turner never wasted words—his vocabulary did not allow of extravagance. I climbed into his “two-seater,” and sat behind, talking to Mrs. Tom, who shared the front seat with her husband. She had to look over her shoulder as we conversed, and she paid my budding manhood the tribute of a shy blush. She called me “Mr.,” too; and I was proud and happy as I sat there talking to her and studying her as only a hobbledehoy can study a young woman.

Every boy goes through this time of standing outside the world of grown women and studying them. A pretty face opens to him a very treasure-house of speculation, and even a plain girl is worth critical examination if the faintest nimbus of romance hang around her head—if it be possible to imagine her loved and loving.

Mrs. Tom was undeniably plain. Her features were sharp, and somewhat large. Her hair and eyes were *pale*—no other word suggests their faded, neutral dulness of tint. Her teeth were white and regular, but sharply prominent. She was well proportioned, yet her figure had the awkward lines of immaturity.

And yet there was nothing about her honest plainness to suggest that pitiless question: “Why did he marry her?” Any man might

have married Mrs. Tom, for any one of a dozen good reasons, without even endangering his reputation for good taste. Mrs. Tom's face was kind, and it had a simple, youthful wholesomeness about it that must have been almost a positive charm, so pleasant does it seem to my memory after all these years. And she certainly had one positive charm, less subtle, yet less easy to tell of in fitting words. Cleanliness is an attribute that we predicate of all decent and lovable folk, yet there are persons whose cleanliness is offensive, and there are others whose cleanliness is so near to godliness as to be altogether lovable. Mrs. Tom carried with her an atmosphere of material as well as moral purity that absolutely radiated a sweet domesticity. Her fresh, soft skin was not brilliant; but it became her, it was characteristic; it was pleasant to the eye—part of a harmonious whole. For Mrs. Tom's soft gray and brown raiment helped to carry out the idea of her that you got from her face. On this day, I remember, she wore a gray gown with a lawn kerchief at her neck—not at all in the fashion of the day, but quite in the eternal fashion of good taste and fitness.

We passed through the gates of the fair grounds and drove to a point on the backstretch of the track, from which we could see

the bright ribbon of blue that already hung between the judges' little signal-tower and the grand stand opposite. When I looked upon the grand stand I stifled another wish that the world of fashion might remember me. I had seen that bleak, rootless structure before, black with country-folk in their holiday attire ; but oh, how changed was it to-day ! A sea, a multicolored sea of parasols covered it, and the bright silken domes bobbed up and down over pretty heads in a way that seemed maddeningly vivacious and engaging to a half-grown boy whose lot was cast, for the hour, with eminent but uninteresting respectability. However, I was in for it where I was, and, having been early instructed in a long antiquated code of manners that forbade me to trample my elders under foot, I did my best to make myself agreeable to my hosts, and found some reward therein. It was something to know the names of all the riders, and to be able to display that proud knowledge.

“That’s Jack Mowatt there, mounting the bay with a star. Adriance is the thin fellow with the chestnut. The little chap on the big gray horse is De Vere—I think he used to be on the stage. The man on the queer-looking buckskin—see! that yellowish one—is McAlpine. He plays billiards with his fingers. The

other one—I think his name is Ferguson—he's on his own horse ; he's so rich he doesn't know what to do with his money, and he's got three horses here ; he only had to hire two. But he can't ride much. It's between Mowatt and Adriance."

"And which is your man?" inquired Mrs. Tom, smiling.

"Mowatt, of course. New York against Kentucky."

"Then he's mine," said Mrs. Tom.

As she spoke the bell rang, the horses started forward, made a bad start, and went back. Then came another bad start, and then they got off, on the worst start of all three, with Mowatt in the lead, and Adriance badly pocketed by De Vere and McAlpine. Jack pushed his horse and rode like a madman. He was a dozen lengths ahead when he passed us.

"Ah!" growled Tom Turner, in disgust: "fool—he'll never last!"

Even to my eyes Jack was riding foolishly. He had a great, heavy-built colt, strong and willing ; but the cheers, the yelling, and, above all, the brutal pace, frightened the poor beast, and on the third lap, when he led by nearly a mile, he began to go wild.

"Bolt, sure!" said Tom, as he saw the leader come into the back-stretch.

And bolt he did, heading straight for us. We stood close to the track, with no rail to separate us. Turner stood nearest the course; I was next, with Mrs. Tom just behind me. She was nervously twisting her handkerchief in both hands; for she had taken her side already, and she was as well able to judge of the chances as any man on the ground.

Then came as quick a bit of work as I ever saw. The big horse left the track, stumbled on the turf, and came down on his knees, Jack Mowatt going over his head. Turner had the animal by the bridle and brought him to his feet in a second, quivering and panting, but unhurt save for a scratch or two. Jack, who had landed lightly, was up again as soon as his horse. In an instant his foot was in the stirrup and his hand on the crupper, and then he stopped. The blood from a sharp cut on his forehead was trickling into his eyes. He dashed it out with his left hand, and then, just as a look of despair came over his face, Mrs. Tom stepped up and tied her white handkerchief around his head, tight and firm. Her face was pale, but her hands were steady, and the bleeding flow was stopped before any one except Jack knew what she was doing.

He knew. His eyes lighted up; he bent, caught one of her hands in his free hand, kissed

it, and swung himself into the saddle. I saw Mrs. Tom's white face flush a burning red, and then I turned to see Jack take the track again, just as the field thundered by us, Adriance far ahead, leading by many lengths.

I am not going to tell the story of that race. It was a cruel affair, as far as it went, for they ran only three heats. Mowatt won. He took his own horse for the next relay, and nearly ruined a splendid animal in four miles of mad riding. But he passed the field as if they stood still, and he rode Adriance down after a long and brutal struggle. At the end of the third heat, when he led the Kentucky boy by a quarter of a mile, and the poor youngster looked as though he were about to fall off his horse, the judges stopped the race. All the other riders had dropped off except the despised Ferguson, who was sticking to it a mile or so in the rear. Three horses had been spoiled for life, and the "sporting blood" of the judges had had all it could endure.

Adriance was badly shaken up. He was out of training and incapable of sustained exertion. He shook Mowatt's hand and tried to smile as he said :

"My only regret is that you weren't born in Kentucky."

The Grand Stand went wild, of course, and

made the most of its two heroes, and even of Ferguson, who had shown an unexpected pluck. Jack Mowatt was the hero of the hour, and the women fairly flung themselves at his feet. If it had not been Jack's lot in life to bask in women's smiles, his head might have been turned. But Jack had flirted from his cradle up, and to have a hundred women worshipping him instead of one was an experience differing only in degree, and not in kind, from many which he had enjoyed in the brief course of his youth.

He smiled on his admirers for a few minutes, and then made for the stable. Half-way there, as if a sudden thought had come to him, he turned and came up the course to our group on the back-stretch. Mrs. Tom flushed red once more as she saw him, and there was still a touch of color in her face when I proudly introduced the hero, and he began to express his gratitude in Jack's own demonstrative way. He said no more than he meant, perhaps; but he said a great deal more than was necessary, and a great deal more, I have no doubt, than he thought he was saying. Mrs. Tom heard him for the most part in silence. When she said anything, it was with a fluttered, nervous brightness that was wholly unlike her natural manner. Yet it was a manner natural enough under the circum-

stances. Nine women out of ten would have talked in just that tone. There was nothing odd about the tone, except that it was Mrs. Tom who used it.

Mowatt could not stay long ; the cut on his head needed dressing, and the local doctor was already beckoning him toward the stables. But before he bade farewell to Mrs. Tom, I could not help hearing a characteristic speech which he made. Turner and I were tightening buckles on the harness, and Mowatt had his back to me as he said :

“I’ll send your handkerchief back to-morrow, Mrs. Turner. I wish—I wish I might keep it, as a memento—of the race. But I suppose——”

I did not hear what Mrs. Tom said in reply. But as we drove home I learned that Tom had agreed to take her to the “hop” at the hotel that evening ; and all the way that I went with them Mrs. Tom looked back to talk to me in that same softly fluttered way, asking questions and running on without waiting for answers. I noticed that the flush was still on her cheeks.

“I’ve never been to a hop at the hotel,” she said. “I suppose it’s quite festive beside our dull doings here. I haven’t an idea what to wear. What do the ladies generally wear?”

Oh, but there! what do you know about such things? You don't notice ladies' dresses, do you? Men never do. But it must be lovely to dance to that splendid band! Do you dance? If you do, you mustn't forget your country friends—" and so on, while Tom drove stolidly along, and I watched this poor little gray pigeon preen her wings—watched her with all a boy's cruel but observant interest.

And here, as the conversation which I had overheard a few minutes before was the beginning of a bad business, for which Jack Mowatt has been often blamed, let me say a word for that unlucky butterfly. I knew him well in after years, and knew him for a perfectly harmless and highly ornamental insect. Flirting was as much a part of his daily existence as eating, drinking, or sleeping—if you can call that flirtation which was merely the exchange of the most obvious flattery and innocently exaggerated deference for that delightfully familiar sort of petting which women are always ready to lavish on the man who is not to be taken seriously. And only two women that I have heard of ever took Jack seriously. One was Mrs. Tom—the other was the girl who finally married him. And it was characteristic of this graceful and voluble woman-worshipper, that, when his time came, and he was really in love, he lost his

tongue and his wits, and had to be dragged through his courtship and up to the speaking-point like any country oaf.

So I think I may fairly say that when Jack kissed Mrs. Tom's hand and begged her handkerchief, he did no more than he would have done had it been his own grandmother, and meant no more ill. It was Jack's way of being decently and respectfully civil to a woman.

It was late that night when I laid aside my books and hurried eagerly over to the hotel. The distant music had twisted up my trigonometry for three hours, and the figures of the lancers and the quadrille had wellnigh driven another sort of figures out of my young head. However, young conscience was somehow satisfied when I entered the great dining-room, turned into a ball-room by the presence of two fiddlers and a double bass and a clarinet, supporting the lean hotel "accompanist" in the piano-corner. Yet I had not been three minutes in that scene of revelry before I wished that I had not left my shabby calf-covered books, my little white-cloth-topped table, my poor kerosene lamp, whereon the moths and mosquitoes stuck fast in the oil, looking like Christian martyrs after the festival of human torches.

Tom Turner was the first person I met. He

was leaving the ball-room, headed for the billiard-room. He only nodded when he saw me.

"Where is Mrs. Turner?" I asked.

"In there," he said, and went on his way. He was always taciturn, impassive, chary of his words; but he spoke with such a sullen shortness that—boy-like—I fancied I had done something to offend him.

I went "in there." It was a little parlor or drawing-room opening from the large hall. There sat Jack Mowatt on a yellow and blue satin divan—a hideous round structure, such as you still may see in the abodes of the aristocracy, on our realistic modern stage. He was doing the wounded hero to perfection, his manly beauty not wholly marred by a narrow strip of sticking-plaster running half-way across his forehead. In front of him half a dozen women had drawn up their chairs to form a circle of worship. There were four young girls not yet out of the age of gigglehood, a black-browed, aquiline-nosed, handsome bird of prey from San Francisco, and Mrs. Tom.

Mrs. Tom in a white silk dress, with a girlish pink sash, and with the pinkest of pink roses in her poor colorless hair; Mrs. Tom talking loud and fast, and talking nonsense—that is what Mrs. Tom's young friend heard and saw

as he stood stupefied in the door-way of the room with the yellow and blue satin divan.

"So like the knights and cavaliers of old!" this young man heard her say. "Didn't you feel like a knight, Mr. Mowatt?"

"Didn't Mr. Mowatt *act* like a knight?" queried the Bird of Prey, dryly, and the four girls giggled.

"I should have been a poor knight without my rescuing lady," said Jack, and the girls giggled again. Mrs. Tom heard them not.

"Mr. Mowatt was the knightliest of knights," she said, laughing shrilly. Her eyes shone; there was a hot color in her high cheek-bones.

I withdrew softly; no one had noticed my presence. They were all too intent on drawing out poor Mrs. Tom—all except Jack, who was frowning furtively at the beauty with the aquiline nose.

I was chagrined and humiliated. The reckless jollity, the crude luxury of the hotel life had attracted me; but my friends were the good, quiet gentlefolk on the hills, and to see one of them made the dupe and the butt of these half-breed savages wounded my juvenile loyalty. I slipped out of the ball-room, and I thought that the whole pleasure of the evening was lost for me, until I stumbled across my

own immature charmer, the youngest of the eight, sulking in a dark corner of the veranda, where she could look in at the gayety which she might not share with her seven elders.

She confided to me that she considered her exclusion "real mean"—she said "reel"—and I sat down by her side and consoled her in the soft summer night. By and by I forgot Mrs. Tom (and myself, wellnigh), and I received a painful shock when Maude Addie said:

"They're dancing the Caledonian quadrille! Who *is* that queer creature dancing all out of time?"

I knew before I looked in the window. It was Mrs. Tom, and Jack Mowatt was her partner. She was dancing furiously, awkwardly, and quite out of time. Some of the younger girls were imitating her angular movements to her very face; but she danced on, smiling, radiant, unconscious of everything but the strange elation that had taken possession of her. By the end the dance had degenerated almost to a romp; but Mrs. Tom smiled on, gayly, triumphantly. A minute later she passed us on Jack's arm.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Turner," I heard him say, "there's no one I ever knew who could dance like you."

"Oh, you flatterer!" said the poor woman,

looking up at him with blind gratitude in her face.

* * * * *

The next morning Mrs. Tom, driving down to the village, as was her custom, stopped at the hotel to see the Bird of Prey, or some other of her new friends, and incidentally carried Jack off for a drive. The day after, Turner went fishing, and Mrs. Tom passed most of the day with the hotellites. The third day it was much the same; on the fourth, I was invited to dinner at the Brinckerhoffs, who were Turner's first-cousins, and after dinner old Mrs. Brinckerhoff took me aside and asked me plumply if it was true that Tom's wife was associating so freely with "those people." I tried to fib, but the occasion was not happy for mendacity.

However, it mattered little. Mrs. Tom's infatuation for her new society was beyond all concealing, and the nature of it was clear enough. She was fighting for her woman's birthright of admiration, romance, and worship. For the first time it had come into her head that she might be as these other women—courted, petted, pelted with rose-leaf flatteries; that she, too, might have her adorers; might drink the champagne of this sparkling, glorious life. A week before she had been contented, in her wholesome dulness, with the

husband whom she had married as a matter of course, who loved her (as she loved him) yet had never made love to her. She had been contented when the glass told her that her face was plain: the thought troubled her no more than the thought that she could not read Greek. She could have honestly admired a beautiful woman, just as she might have respected a Greek scholar. She had never longed for beauty: it went for little in her world—for less than fair birth or breeding, and both of these she had. It was natural enough that she should have been contented. Do you envy the splendid colonel whom you admire as he rides at the head of his regiment? Do you want his uniform to go about your business in? Do you want his mettlesome great horse, that you couldn't ride to save your life? Do you want even his glory, bought at the cost of wounds and cares and privations? Not for an instant. Envy of *him* will never keep you awake o' nights. But join his regiment as the rawest of privates, and you will envy every rag of gold lace on that man's body. So it was with Mrs. Tom. A man had kissed her hand, and she longed for beauty.

Beauty itself she must have known was beyond her reach. But that she could be in the ranks of beauty, be one of the women who

charm and are courted, breathe the delicious incense of men's adoration—this had been revealed to her by proof indubitable. Had not the very paragon of women-worshippers kissed her hand? Was he not wearing her handkerchief in his waistcoat? Cinderella had come to the court of the king!

It was a mad fancy of Mrs. Tom's, but it was born, perhaps, of vague, half-formulated, half-repressed dreams that none of those about her knew of, and it was fostered by a most malicious combination of circumstances. Jack began his innocent blandishments in good faith; then he passed, all unsuspecting, to a dangerous jest; then he found the jest broadening under the smiles of the spectators, and sought a way out of it by turning it into palpable burlesque—palpable, he found, to all save the woman whose head he had turned—a woman who had no sense of humor, and who had never heard of the possibility of raillery so cruel and unchivalrous. And then, foreseeing in himself a red-handed butcher of courtesy and delicacy, he lost his head and took to his heels. He was much to be condemned—he was condemned—but this is to be said for him, that he began in good faith and went wrong before he knew it; and that the management of a maniac, when that maniac is a woman

insane on the subject of her own charms, is a problem that might prove too much for many an older man of the world than this poor flibbertigibbet of twenty-one.

His solution of the problem was simple. On Friday he went to New York—on business, he said. He was to be back by Saturday evening. Calypso waited for him Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. On Tuesday she saw his trunks go out of the hotel, marked for New York. A letter to one of his friends among the men conveyed the intelligence that he was called away by the illness of a relative.

It turned out to be no solution at all. He dealt his victim a cruel blow, but did not awaken her from her dream. In that one week Mrs. Tom had heard more about flirtations and jiltings and transfers of affection generally than she had heard in all her previous life. She had even met one ingenuous Southern maid who was habitually engaged to three gentlemen at once. She accepted this as her first defeat in a world which she had already learned was a world of secret but unceasing strife. She smothered her humiliation, and determined to go on with the fight.

She had no difficulty in carrying on her campaign. She was a rich joke for the hotel, in more senses than one. The harpy contin-

gent had already discovered that she was well-to-do in her own right. They set their young men to "taking turns at Mrs. Tom," and keeping her supplied with all the flattering attentions which she would accept. And, by the irony of fate, she found a genuine adorer. He was a sulky, loutish youth, who had been brought up on a farm until he came into the fortune of an oil-well uncle. This silent, dull youngster, half a dozen years her junior, fell honestly in love with her, and trailed about after her like an ill-conditioned poodle.

A lively chase Mrs. Tom led him. The end of that second week found her in the forefront of all the hotel gayety. She slept at home; but her days and her evenings were passed with her hotellites, who diverted themselves without ceasing. That week a flash, fashionable dressmaker and milliner came up from New York, and Mrs. Tom gave orders for dresses that made the eyes shine in the scheming heads of the birds of prey. The dresses were confected with great rapidity under their directions, and such marvels of gorgeous bad taste were they that, even in that day of loud things, they scandalized the most advanced thought of the hotel. Mrs. Tom, clean out of her modest depth in color, fairly floundered in reds and greens and blues and yellows;

and let me remind you that we had had no Morris in those days, no Burne-Jones to tell us of the sin of primary colors, or to teach us the holiness of sage-green and the sacredness of old gold and the terra-cotta family. Mrs. Tom made ample return for these aids to fashionable elegance. She lent money to ladies expecting remittances, and showed unwearying patience in awaiting the remittances; she guaranteed their credit at the dressmaker's; she gave them costly presents; and she paid her scot on all the excursions and picnic parties: festivities which were not conducted on a modest scale. One of them won some fame at the time. Ferguson, the millionaire contractor, took a driving-party of twenty to the Mountain House, a sporting resort some ten miles away, up in the hills; and when they sat down to supper (cooked by a New York *chef*, served by New York waiters) each lady found her napkin rolled up in a gold bracelet set with diamonds, by way of a napkin-ring—a dainty conceit of the millionaire's. It was at this supper, I believe, that they induced Mrs. Tom to sing “dites-lui,” and found great sport therein.

But what, you ask, were Mrs. Tom's relatives doing all this while? They were doing just about what relatives and friends usually do

under comparable circumstances, and to just about as much purpose. "If any of *my* people," we have all said, at one time or another, "were to attempt to disgrace the family, *I* should do—" this, that, or the other. But, when the time comes, we all of us find that we have very little influence in the matter, and that a wilful whippersnapper of eighteen, even, can peg stones at the family escutcheon at his or her sweet will. How about your niece? Didn't she run away and join the comic-opera company, as she said she would? How about my cousin? Didn't he marry her, as he said he would? You and I are connections by marriage, and we wouldn't be if we could have helped it.

And what was Tom Turner doing? For the first three weeks everybody asked that question. By the fourth week everybody knew that he was drinking hard. He found himself in a situation that was to him as incomprehensibly unreal as a nightmare. His orderly, narrow life afforded no precedent to guide him. He knew that everything was wrong. He knew not how to set it right. He remonstrated, he quarrelled with her; then he relapsed into sullen silence, went fishing day after day, and drank more than was good for him.

I have no doubt that his meagre vocabulary put him at a disadvantage. He could tell his wife that she was "carrying on," perhaps that she was "making a fool of herself;" but beyond this he probably found himself unable to characterize her conduct without saying that it was "not respectable." And with men of Tom's class this phrase had a specific meaning which would have made its use impossible. Tom could not insult his wife with the thought. Indeed, through all the time of her folly, no one ever dreamed of thinking it anything worse than folly, pure and simple. Even the hotel harpies knew better than to misconstrue her silliness. The most cynical and reckless of the velveteen-coated adventurers would not have dared to enlighten Mrs. Tom's ignorance; for whatever black depths there might be in the world where she moved, they were carefully screened from her eyes, and to the end she believed that the "flirtations" of those about her were as innocent as her own.

As to Tom, she told him he was prejudiced, unkind, and selfish. She was doing no harm, she was spending her own money, she was having a good time. If he did not like her friends, well and good. And so Tom went off to his fish and his bottle, and Mrs. Tom went on making herself the laughing-stock of the

hotel and the horror of her family. The people on the hills wept over her, and the children at the hotel invented a pretty pastime which they called "making believe be Mrs. Tom."

* * * * *

One morning in the first week of September I stood on the steps of the hotel gazing at Mr. Ferguson's new span of horses, when I heard a rustle of silks by my side, a hand was laid lightly on my shoulder, and a high-pitched voice, which I knew in spite of its affected, drawling tone, said:

"Why, *de-ar* boy! I haven't seen you in an age!"

It was Mrs. Tom, or what passed for Mrs. Tom in these days, though it was not easy to recognize her at a glance, in her glaring red and green shot-silk, with rouge and powder making a hectic illumination on her high-boned cheeks, with her eyebrows blackened, her hair dyed a strange shiny yellow, and with diamonds stuck and hung all over her—at ten o'clock in the morning.

"I must get Ferguson," she said, "to let me take you out behind these grays. You shall handle the ribbons, and you shall smoke, too, if you like. Why don't you let us see something of you? We" (she dwelt on the pronoun as though it were sweet in her mouth) "would

like to have you. And if you want to have a good time, you know, you've got to come with *us*. And there's just the chance for you, dear boy! Young Mason, who's been making himself so sweet to Mrs. Gilderoy—his mother's just taken him away. She was afraid!" (Mrs. Tom tittered.) "Now's your chance. Do you know Mrs. Gilderoy? No? She's from New Orleans. The *loveliest* woman! Yes, you positively must come to the front."

I stumbled out some confused acknowledgment. I felt all the shame that she should have felt. She saw my blush, and smiled complacently as she moved away. She took it for the tribute of bashfulness.

I watched her as she walked along the veranda. She was trying to imitate a carriage that had a brief vogue at that time—the body was thrown forward of the hips, involving a general distortion of various anatomical processes.

She sat down among her friends, who were scarcely less besilked and bejewelled than she. I looked back to the street, and saw Tom Turner's road-wagon turning in from the Highkill Falls road.

It was a sight common enough of late. Turner often spent the night at Highkill, where there was a sportsmen's tavern, and

his man drove over for him in the morning. But to-day Turner was not in the wagon. His man was driving alone, and he drove straight for the hotel, peering under the veranda as he came until his eye fell on his mistress. He alighted, went up to her, gave her a note, and marched back to his wagon.

Mrs. Tom read the letter, gave a husky little cry, turned paler than her powder, and straightened out rigid, as though she were in an epileptic fit. The group of women closed in about her. I hurried toward them, but, before I came near, Mrs. Tom had recovered herself, at least enough to walk with a woman on each side of her, and they took her to the nearest room. She passed within a yard of me, and the frightened, stricken stare of the eyes that looked out from that painted face was like a vision of death and judgment.

I need hardly say that in her few moments of unconsciousness somebody in the crowd read her letter. I heard its contents discussed in the open street. It was from Tom, and said that he had gone away, and that she should not see him again. It was a drunken man's letter; but, drunk or sober, Tom never failed of his word.

* * * * *

The next day a delegation of the harpies,

who had no notion to let their prey slip away so easily, drove up to call on poor dear Mrs. Turner. They were refused admittance at the gates. The three children were dangerously ill, the lodge-keeper said, and Mrs. Turner would see no one.

It was believed for a time that the sickness of the children was a mere excuse for retirement; but the next day the local doctor hailed me from his gig, and gave me some news. He was a testy, kindly, vehement conservative, this little gray old doctor.

"Your people have gone home, haven't they?" he asked.

"Yes, sir—last week. I've got to stay and finish my grind. It's a beast."

"Well, you'd best get out, too. There's something like an epidemic in town. The three Turner children are down. I think they'll come out all right—mother's with 'em now, nursing 'em day and night—but it's hard to tell. Dysentery—that's all—but I've had seven other cases within thirty-six hours, and there are one or two I don't like the looks of. Don't believe in scares—but you know what the papers say. Cholera on the other side—had a genuine case in New York yesterday. Just about time we had another turn of it in this country. And if it

does come, young man, this is the sort of place that's just ripe for it. Five hundred new people here since June—not a drain—not a damn drain—beg your pardon, sir! It's manslaughter—rank manslaughter! And if it gets into that devil's toy-shop there"—he pointed to the hotel—"it will have everything its own way—close the cussèd place, I hope. *Clk!* Kitty, git up! Don't you stay here, my boy; don't you stay here! *Clk!*"

Being a boy, of course I did not go. The prospect of beholding a pestilence was far too alluring.

The doctor was right. Bad drainage—or, rather, no drainage at all—and a summer of uninterrupted heat had worked together to produce a local epidemic of a serious nature. It was on a Monday that this conversation was held; on Tuesday a half dozen cases appeared at the hotel, and then this little army of frivolity, a host of weak creatures with nothing to tie up to in this world or the next, were smitten with utter, shameless panic. Those of them who could go at once went. Before Wednesday night one hundred and twenty-seven people had left the hotel. More than that number remained against their will, held by one cause or another—in most cases, impecuniosity. There were many fair ladies in

that caravansary who were in the habit of depositing their diamonds in the hotel-safe at night, not because they were in fear of thieves, but because the proprietor particularly requested it. Various gentlemen, moreover, were chained, as it were, to the bar-room slate and the account-book of the billiard-room keeper. There was much telegraphing for remittances, and the faro-bank did a rushing business twenty-four hours in the day, and would willingly have kept open twenty-five hours, had it been possible.

Saturday ended this carnival of fear, for the great hotel closed. Nearly sixscore people, sick and well, left the great barracks staring at the dull fall day out of its hundreds of blindless windows, marched down the long street, and piled in confusion into the two stuffy little cars that made up a train on the shaky little railroad that ran from Northoak to the Hudson River. The more decent of the lot somehow settled in the rearward car; in that behind the engine, the wilder spirits got together, and to watch these I slipped in and seated myself on the wood-box.

That was a hideous journey. Fear—the most abject, dastardly, selfish fear possessed this crowd that was so brazen three days before; and, after the manner of their kind, they

tried to hide it with bravado. Some had bottles of champagne, all had whiskey or brandy, and as time went on they drank themselves half-wild. They sang, they shouted, they made mad and brutal jokes. The restrictions of decency and even of discretion were forgotten. Strange relationships stood out in undisguised frankness, and the ugliest part of all their ugliness was the open selfishness that showed how frail was the tie that knit one human being to another. And among them all not one spoke the word that summed up all their terrors. They spoke of "it," and that "it" meant the Cholera. Typhus and malaria were waiting for many of them; but of these dangers, which had obviously menaced them through all their sojourn at that drainless barrack, they thought nothing. It was a baseless terror, an all but impossible possibility, that struck terror to their weak souls.

Save myself, there were but two silent passengers in the car. Directly opposite me sat the bird of prey, Mrs. Gilderoy of New Orleans. Sheer fright had prostrated her, and had brought back an old trouble, quiescent for years. She had been taken with hemorrhage of the lungs. She had telegraphed to New York, to a certain Sister of Charity. "She will come," the scared wretch said; and she

had come, and now was taking this pallid shadow of a woman back to New York, to die within the white walls of a hospital, no longer a person, an agent for good or ill in the breathing world—a number, in a numbered cot, for which some other wretch waits, to be a number in her turn. Looking at the faces of these two women, as they sat side by side, you saw that they were sisters in another sense than that of Christian charity. But peace was in one face and deadly fear in the other.

Just as we drew into our station on the Hudson, a woman fainted, and an access of fright set the whole carload of men and women struggling for the doors. That was the last I saw of them. They took the railroad; I crossed the river in a row-boat and went down to New York in a freight-barge, which is the ideal way of travelling, if there are no calves aboard.

* * * * *

It was ten years before I saw Northoak again, and it was only an idle impulse that took me there. I had three or four last days at the end of a vacation in the mountains. My party had disbanded; no one expected me in New York before the next Monday. It came into my head to stop at Northoak on my way back, to whip the trout-streams after

my own fashion—a luxury I cannot indulge in when there are professional-amateur anglers to wither me with their scorn. Yes, I take a book in my pocket, and, if the trout will not have me, I lie down under a tree and walk the London streets with Mr. Samuel Pepys, monstrous fine in his waistcoat made of his wife's brocade petticoat, or stroll under the Italian skies with Eichendorff's Good-for-nothing in his mystic, magical *Wanderjahre*. North-oak trout were too small game for the gentry who despise this sort of fishing; yet there be trout at Northoak, so there I went. I had other reasons, of course—a foolish fancy of reminiscence leading me back to look for boyhood in boyhood's paths.

I found my old abiding-place, still a refuge for the stranger, but now only as a lodging-house for those who “mealed” at the hotel. It was kept by a brisk woman of business, fresh from New England, who could tell me nothing of my old friends. I asked for the room that had been mine; but when I saw it, and found how close and small it was (and always must have been), I gladly took a larger chamber on the floor below.

I went to dinner at the hotel. There it was, the same hotel, but, oh! how changed from that hotel I had known. All the smartness of

it had vanished. The wood-work was warped ; the paint, of a later era of bad taste, was dull and weather-worn ; the frescoed ceiling of the great dining-room had fallen in a dozen places, and the damages had been repaired with white plaster. The yellow and blue satin furniture was gone. Strange, angular furniture had taken its place. I was told that it was in the East-lake style. The house was full—filled with quiet, decorous families from Boston and Philadelphia, with a small mingling of highly respectable, hard-working artists. I don't think there was a bottle of champagne in the place. I know that there was a sewing-circle in the rooms where the faro-bank used to be, and a candy-shop in the place of the saloon.

Not a trace left of the old life—the old silly, reckless, dangerous, hopeful, happy life. Everything is better now, wiser, more wholesome. And yet we were happy in those days when the “Blue Danube” was new ; when we first beheld *le sabre de mon père* ; when our veins thrilled with the potentiality of pleasures that we have grown tired of since—in those crude days when things were fresher than they are now. And this much I am sure of : we who left our boyhood behind us a score of years ago were a deal merrier, more companionable, juicier fellows than the finished youths of

to-day, who take their pleasures so sadly, who know such a weary, worresome lot about what is good form and what isn't, and who treat women just as they treat men.

On the morning after my arrival I sat in my room writing letters. Looking up and out the window, I saw a dog-cart going along the street. In it sat a gray-haired woman, bolt upright, dressed in a gown of yellow and black, so strange in fashion, as well as in color, that it might have been the caprice of a madwoman. I saw her—and she was gone. But I knew Mrs. Tom.

I had a feeling of something like dizziness as I tried to realize that I had actually seen this thing, and not dreamed it. I had seen Mrs. Tom, gray-haired and pale, dressed in the clothes I had seen her in a decade before. What was she now? A ghostly maniac, revisiting the scenes of her mad happiness?

I thought about it until I could write letters no longer, and set out for a walk. I had hardly crossed the threshold of the house when a voice cried:

“Hello!”

I stopped, and a man grasped my hand.

“Knew you right off!” he said. “Glad to see you. Changed, haven't you? Stopping here, eh? No! Won't do! Come up to my

house. Mrs. Turner glad to see you. After trout? Show you lots. Mustn't stay here—won't have it! Come for you at three. Get your traps ready. Bless you—knew you right off—didn't I?"

I had been only a boy when he knew me for a summer or two, but when he bade me good-by, after making me promise to visit him, he walked off, smiling, as though he had met his best friend. He was changed, too. His hair was grizzled, and when he was not speaking his eyes had a half-vacant, half-sleepy look that had not belonged to his youthful stolidity.

At three he came for me, and I had to go, much as I dreaded meeting Mrs. Tom. He was cheerful as we drove along, but as taciturn as of old. If he spoke, it was to say something about the weather or the crops, or the cattle in the fields which we passed. Mrs. Turner was well, he said, and the children. They had had another one since I had seen them—a splendid boy, four years old now. A fine growing summer! They would have the finest crop of hay ever gathered in the county—didn't I think so?

We found Mrs. Tom in the great drawing-room that opened on the lawn, and my heart sank within me as I saw that she was dressed in a gown of faded pink, almost as startlingly

out of fashion as the odd garment she had worn in the morning. But though she blushed a little as she greeted me (and her blush, against her soft gray hair, made her look almost pretty), she showed no embarrassment, no strangeness of manner, and in a moment I felt quite at ease, not only for myself but for her. At the first look, I fancied that her pale face seemed stern; at the second, I saw in it such a sweet dignity that I wondered why I had ever thought of the clothes she had on.

After a while the children came in, and presently Turner took them off to see if the new Jersey cow had arrived. The three elder were attractive children. The two girls were perhaps fifteen and sixteen, well mannered, and pretty, or comely at least. The boy was a fine fellow of thirteen, with a manly way about him. The youngest was of a different sort. I thought him dull and heavy, and he had the pettish bearing of a spoiled child. But I saw that this Benjamin was as the apple of his mother's eye. There was a difference not only of degree but of kind in the look which she cast after him as her eyes followed her children out of the room.

They had hardly gone when she looked up at me with a tremulous eagerness and said:

“You didn't want to come? No, I under

stand. But I wanted to tell you that I'm glad to have you here. Of course, I wanted you to come because it pleased *him*; but I'm glad to see you, anyway—for myself, don't you know."

I said that I had hoped she would care to see me; but she paid no attention to my awkward commonplaces, and went on:

"I thought you'd feel that I wouldn't want to see you, on account of—that time, you know—my spree. Oh, yes, I know. That's what they called it. I know a good deal now that I didn't know then. I know just how—just how I seemed to people. That's why I don't mind seeing *you*. It wasn't quite the same with you. You never had anything to do with making me behave—as I did."

She snatched up a little dress from the work-basket by her side, stretched it out and shaped it upon her lap, threaded a needle with that mechanical deftness which belongs to women, and began sewing and talking at once.

"I don't believe you ever made fun of me. *They* all did. I've often thought since, thinking how those men pretended to make love to me, that you were always *respectful*—don't you understand me? It made me feel, when I used to think about it, that I was *worth* it—you know what I mean? I've ground my teeth sometimes just for pain, and then I've

thought how nice you were to me, and I've felt better."

Great God! I thought to myself, can the chance of a boy's decent breeding mean so much to his fellow-beings?

"I didn't mean to talk about that time," she began again, after she had stitched for a minute in silence. "I only meant to tell you something so that you would understand how it is now. I don't know whether you heard much about what happened afterwards."

"I heard something," I said; "you went West."

"Not till the next summer. We tried all we could, but we didn't find out where he was till then. And Ethel wasn't really strong until June. Then I heard where he was, and I went out and found him in Omaha."

She paused again, and kept her head down close over her work.

"He wouldn't even see me. He wouldn't let me come near him. He was drinking, you know. I don't mean that I blame him"—she raised her head and looked me in the eye, feeling herself the champion of her husband—"he never would have done it if it hadn't been for me—and he wasn't himself." She dropped her head again. "Then he had the delirium, and I could come and nurse him, and then

came the brain fever, and after that he woke up one morning just as clear as ever—just like his own self—and he's been so ever since. That's when we came home; and, oh, it seemed to me that I could just get down and kiss the ground!"

She held her work at arm's length and winked at it until she could see it clearly.

"I don't know that I should say just his old self," she began again; "he's never been the same, exactly. You know he used to be quite bright."

I never had known it—but I said I had.

"Well, I think he's getting clearer all the time. He knew you at once, didn't he?"

"He spoke to me first," I hastened to say, "before I recognized him."

"Yes, he came home and told me. He was very proud of it. That's one reason why I was so glad you came. *He* knows it, you know, and it's such a gain when he feels sure of himself."

I nursed my vanity for a while. Then Mrs. Tom began once more, looking straight at me, though her cheeks were flushed.

"Of course you've noticed—" Her eyes dropped, and she looked at her dress as though she would have me look at it. "I'm wearing them out."

I suppose my eyes were blankly inquisitive.

"They're the things I had *then*. I'm wearing them out. It's a part of my penance. I don't mean in a Roman Catholic way, you know," she interpolated, with a look of shocked affright in her eyes; "I don't mean anything of that sort, of course, but only—oh, you can't get away from what you've done. And you wouldn't believe it, but in that one month that I was—on my spree—I had nineteen dresses made, and had eleven more ordered, just to have more than anybody else in that horrid place. And then there were fourteen that I had ordered from Paris. They came home at Christmas, just the day before. That was my only Christmas present that year—and hadn't I bought it myself? Oh, I knew *that* then!"

She had dropped her work and had folded her hands in her lap.

"I don't know that I can make you understand why I wear those things," she said. "It's like having a whip on my back, sometimes, to get them on. I don't know why I'm talking to you like this, anyway, except that I never *have* talked to any one. But, don't you see, the children are growing up, and they'll know all about it. Oh, I've told them—the older ones—but they don't understand. It doesn't mean anything to them. They can't think

their mother ever did anything wrong. It's like talking of original sin to them. But you know they'll be out in the world—that is, our world here—in a little while, and then it will all be told to them, and you know *how* it will be told—you know just how they'll have to hear it. And it's always seemed to me that if they saw me in those clothes they'd understand it—that they wouldn't be so far away from it—that they'd feel they knew about it, and it was something that had come naturally to them; and they could forgive it, and say, 'Poor mother, we don't mind *that!*' And they're so used to me—so used to these things—I think they will. Don't you understand?"

The setting sun made the white walls pink. I watched the warm light spreading. I had looked once in Mrs. Tom's eyes, and I had nothing to say. But soon she spoke again, in a cheerful, hopeful voice.

"I've worn them all almost out. When I get to the end of them, I'll have my own things again."

By and by the children came in once more. The new cow had arrived, and papa was waiting for mamma in the lower pasture. We went down, and joined with Tom in praising the beautiful Jersey. I noticed that at every word of critical praise he uttered he appealed to his

wife, and that she confirmed his judgment in a tone that was almost maternal. Even so might a mother assent to her boy's simple guesses at the use and meaning of the things about him.

As we left the pasture Tom took his wife's hand to direct her attention to something in the economy of the farm about which he asked her advice. We went up the hill in the twilight, and I lingered behind with the children, and saw that he still kept hold of the tips of her fingers, as they walked up the hill together.

* * * * *

Mrs. Tom is dead, or this tale would not be told. But it is only a few years ago that she died, and I think that she had time enough on earth to wear out those cruel clothes, and to sit a while with her husband and her children, clad in such a soft gray gown as I saw her wear once upon a time, with a white handkerchief folded over a peaceful breast.

SQUIRE FIVE-FATHOM.

THERE had been a heavy rain the night before, and I was playing with sand and water in the deep trench between the road and the lower wall of my father's garden, and enjoying it as much as a boy of eight years can enjoy anything without the company of other boys. A swift stream of clear water rushed down this sandy gutter, and made for me a far-western river, on whose bank I was constructing a fort to defy the hostile Indians. I had selected a grassy promontory jutting out into the stream, and had pulled all the grass out by the roots and levelled the earth, and was beginning on my fortifications, when I observed with alarm the dissolution of the point of my site, which, no longer held together by the fibrous grass roots, was rapidly turning into black mud and going down the current in a cloud.

I tried to stem the flood with a flat stone set on end; but it would not stay on end, and I

was contemplating the necessity of a change of base for my military operations, when the tip of a thick walking-stick was thrust between my face and the water, and I heard a tremulous, eager old voice cry earnestly :

“Further up—further up, my lad; there—there where you have it now—set off the current ever so little. Ay, that’s it! Now build your sea-wall—good boy!”

I obeyed him mechanically, and in a few seconds saw the stream swirl off from my point, leaving it in a safe space of calm water. The Indians on the other shore must have felt gloomy forebodings.

I looked up. A tall, gaunt old gentleman, with a Roman nose, and a delicate mouth with deep wrinkles about it, as though he drew his lips together a good deal, stood and looked hard at the water. He did not look at me at all; but I looked hard at him—at his sad old face, his shabby brown broadcloth coat, the great rusty black safin stock about his neck, and his napless beaver hat with its rolling brim.

He stared at the water for a moment or two, gave an odd sort of half-choked sigh, and passed on his way.

That was the first time Squire Five-Fathom spoke to me.

The town where I lived and fought Indians

was called Gerrit's Gate. (For the benefit of a generation that pronounces Coney Island and Hoboken as they are spelled, that knows not oelykoeks, and that desecrates suppawn by calling it mush, let me say that Gerrit to the eye is Garrit to the ear.) The story of Gerrit's Gate is the story of Myndert Gerrit and his son, the old gentleman who helped me in my civil-engineering.

Myndert Gerrit came from Schenectady to found the place. He was a rich man by inheritance, and he had moreover inherited pride, ambition, and a high temper—a mental and spiritual outfit which put him sadly out of place in a conservative old midland town. I do not know just what was his quarrel with Schenectady; but I know he bought his square mile of "military lots" on the shore of Lake Ontario with the avowed intention of building up a town that should be to Schenectady as a mountain to a hill—and that should incidentally out-rival Rochester and Oswego. He said, and indeed it seemed, that the finger of Heaven had pointed out the place.

As he stood on the hill to the southwest of his new purchase, Myndert Gerrit saw before him three wooded promontories stretching out into the lake—Near Point to the east, Far Point to the west, and Middle Point, shorter by half

than its neighbors, nestling between them, and dividing a large bay into two snug harbors. Middle Point must have been, centuries ago, as long as the others, but it had been fighting a slowly losing battle with the mighty current from the west that swept inward from Far and out again past the end of Near Point. This current made entrance to the western harbor difficult—even dangerous; but the eastern it was an easier matter to reach, and, once in, the largest ship on the lake could lie in safe water while the northwester went by Far and Near and the current hammered away at Middle, making a poor foot a year out of the firm, root-bound soil. And at the head of this little haven the land lay in a low plateau, forming a natural levee.

Here came Myndert Gerrit in 1822, with his only son (he was a widower) and his whole household, including ten free negroes, formerly his slaves. The son was then a man of thirty, unmarried, and devoted in all things to his father. They were constant companions, and, as far as I could learn, they cared little for other society. Gerrit reserved the high eastern promontory for his own mansion. He laid the foundation that year, while he and his people lived in log cabins. During the summer he surveyed the level land, and staked it out for

streets. In the fall he went to New York, and he returned the next spring, leading a caravan of some twenty families, and bringing with him the machinery for a saw-mill and a grist-mill. It was a long and tiresome journey—a great labor of transportation; but, by water and by wagon, they made it in about a month.

Laborers came from neighboring villages (or rather settlements), and ground was broken without delay. They cut a good road running two miles to the eastward, where it opened up a branch of Gravelly River, which gave them flat-boat navigation to the line of the Grand Canal, as they called the Erie, at that time within a year or two of completion.

The mansion on Near Point was finished in September, and the two Gerrits went to live in it. Standing at his west window late one afternoon, he looked out and saw a sight that filled him with pride. Middle Point was shorn of every tree, and bristled only with surveyor's stakes. Only the great gaps in the earth showed where the twisted roots had been, and these were growing into larger holes, that marked the sites of houses to be. Up in the streets back of the levee a few light structures had already arisen. Two or three temporary docks stretched out into the quiet blue waters of the harbor. Myndert Gerrit looked longest at Middle Point,

now a low table of land with water on both sides. A street—or what was to be a street—ran down its middle, from the water to where, at the mainland, it joined the great road that stretched away through the woods to the river—to the great world—to trade and life and fortune.

“Now,” he said to his son, “my part is done. I have made all ready for them. Now we may begin to look for returns.”

Ay, Myndert Gerrit, your part is done, and it was done when you uprooted the first tree and dug the first well on Middle Point. Look from your window to-day in the red Fall sunset, and see if you can, in your fancy, the town of your love and hope. See the glister of the evening sun on the low roofs of houses, on steeple and spire rising serenely above them. See it redden the chimneys of homes and set its dazzling blaze in the window-panes. Hear if you can, in your thought, the sound of people moving about the streets, of children’s voices at play, of clanking anvils, of horses’ feet on the roadways, of creaking cordage and flapping canvas where your laden ships lie at their docks with their white sails emblazoned by the warm light of the west! See it—hear it—be glad of it in the pride of your heart; rejoice in the town in which you

have sunk all your wealth and the heritage of your son ! For when you wake to-morrow you will awake from a dream, your returns shall be water and the wind of the North ; your house shall be taken from you, and in a little while you shall have no part or lot in this home of your own choosing—save in six feet of earth above your face.

That night Myndert Gerrit heard the north-wester come roaring down from the Canada forests ; but he paid no heed to it. He had heard it many a night before. It might knock at his headland gates till it wearied, for all he cared.

But the next morning at five o'clock, his son, looking pale and frightened, came to his bedside, and told him he must go at once to the town—so they called it already. He dressed himself and hastened to Middle Point, and there he found all the townspeople gathered. They stood in little knots, or wandered about trying to make out the full extent of the damage. Their faces were pale, and showed ghastly in the gray and doubtful light. A chill of alarm and apprehension had seized them. They looked suspiciously and almost resentfully at the old man and his son. What had these two men brought them to ?

Myndert Gerrit saw his great mistake with

his eyes, but his heart at first refused to accept the truth. He was like a man who sees death for the first time, knows it is death, and yet cannot make it real to his own mind that the blood will no more flow in the cold veins, that the heart shall not beat again, that breath and life have gone out together. At first he went about bravely, showing the people how a jetty here, and a dyke there, and a sea-wall in a third place would put all to rights; but even before his hearers had seen that the remedy was far beyond any means that they possessed, he himself knew that the danger to come was not to be met by any scheme of his devising. The greater part of the Point was still there, but fifty yards were gone from the farther end, and the unprotected earth was still crumbling into the turbid current. The cellars were full of water, and along the western side deep gullies ran up to the line of the main street. The framework and foundation of the Point were gone; it was a mere bank of earth before that violent and uncontrollable inland ocean.

When he saw this, he went back to his house and locked himself in his room, and not even his son saw him until the next day. Then he appeared again, and tried, for a little, to save the day by moving his settlement farther back. But the panic was too strong for him; the

people would have none of him or his settlement. Some of them were for going back to their old homes; but the most went over to Far Point and bought land there, for Gerrit paid back to every man what his land had cost him. Then he took to his bed, and died on New Year's day, leaving his son to straighten out the tangle of his affairs. This task, prosecuted with the sternest economy and industry, occupied seven years. At the end of the seven years, he had paid off every cent that his father owed, and he himself was able to live on a pitiful remainder of their great fortune, just enough to pay for what little he ate and drank. He lived rent free in one of the old cabins on the level land. That marshy strip was his yet, for no one cared to take it from him.

Middle Point was gone entirely. A low earth bluff marked its landward end. The water had crept up, urged by the current, that now set far in, and out along Near Point; and a shallow inlet ran far up into what had been the levee. On the edge of the inlet, among the low trees and underbrush at the base of the high point on which his father's house had stood, old John Gerrit dwelt in his little log cabin, that had once been the temporary shelter of his father's negroes. He was fifty years old when the sad work of his life was done; and

knowing of no other work for himself, having no other aim in life, he sat himself down to live life out without troubling his neighbors.

* * * * *

A quarter of a century passed between the wreck of the Gerrit fortunes and the days when I first saw the old man, who had once been the young man of the house, walking about the streets of Gerrit's Gate in those unaccountable rusty clothes of his, which, though he changed them often enough, never looked new or fresh. Gerrit's Gate, in the meanwhile, had thriven, after a fashion, in the very teeth of fortune, and in spite of being settled upon the site despised of Myndert Gerrit. In my boyhood it had a couple of grain-elevators (which changed hands every year or so), a steam saw-mill, a lumber-yard, and a patent-medicine factory. It had old residents and new residents, a conservative party and a progressive party. Need I say that the progressive party was divided from its opponents on the question of getting such an appropriation from Congress as would stimulate the town's consumptive prosperity with the glow of commercial health, and make her the metropolis of the northern lakes?

What I have here set down of John Gerrit's early history I gathered in part from my father, in part from John Gerrit himself. But it was

not until after the old man's death that I learned why the old folks of the town called him Squire Five-Fathom. It seemed, an old lake sailor told me, that the water off the end of what had been Middle Point stood just thirty feet deep, and the ridge of rock that had formed the Point's foundation was marked "Five-Fathom Point" on old charts—marked as a dangerous spot, where the current had seized more than one storm-driven ship and cast her against the stony shore.

But what I had heard was quite enough to fire a boy's imagination; and, from the day he first spoke to me, Squire Five-Fathom was to me a figure of romance and mystery who got tangled up in my dreams with Old Mortality, and Robinson Crusoe, and Ethan Brand—I had no "Jack Popaways" or "Young Gold Coiners" to read about in my lone provincial youth. I stood at the gate to watch him as he went past the house every morning toward the town, on the pitiful little errands of his commissary. How long he made those errands—how much ground he contrived them to cover! Many a time, in later years, I have seen him going from shop to shop, and even wandering in search of street stands, that he might buy the one apple that seemed to him best worth a "penny."

Thus I worshipped for a long time, in silence and at a distance. Then came a dull, cloudy summer Saturday afternoon, when my parents went to Catullus Corners, a town some miles down our little branch railroad, for the funeral of some aunt or cousin, and I was left alone, in charge of an Irish handmaiden, who presently swore me to secrecy and herself went off to a christening. She told me, as she departed, that if I stirred "off the block"—my usual limits of solitary excursion, set by paternal decree—the banshee of the family would catch me. But, ah! I was beyond the day of faith in the banshee, and the Celtic wraith had no terrors for me. I hung awhile on the gate, waiting for some wandering boy that I might lure him in to play with me; but no boy came. As I look back now, it seems to me that boys must have been very scarce at Gerrit's Gate. Perhaps they were all fishing on that day, for it was cloudy and still. All I know is, they came not. I looked up and down the road. I walked to the east corner and back, and then to the west corner, and then temptation seized me. It was only a couple of hundred yards down the dusty high-road to the head of the lane that led down to the inlet. There, in the mysterious, enchanting thickets by the water's edge, lay the dwelling of the one human being

of my acquaintance who looked as though he had come out of one of those books which were far more real to me then than real life.

Far off, the clock in our kitchen struck three. Three long hours before my father and mother should return ! Three long hours of a lonely summer afternoon, and only a feeble and inadequate conscience of eight years' growth to stiffen my moral backbone and nerve me to heroism and renunciation ! One stray momentary glimmer of sunlight flashed through the clouds, and lit up the leafy entrance to the lane.

Three minutes later I was running down that bough-roofed avenue, my pace gradually slowing, for the gleam of sunlight was gone, and it was dismally dim under the trees. But the delicious thrill of illicit adventure was in all my small body, and by and by I was out of the dim shade and on the broad, open path that the pot-hunters had trodden all around the inlet. Then I saw below me its shallow reaches of water, paved with round stones, and bordered with bushes. Then, almost before I knew where I was, the log cabin lay right under my feet, between the path and the edge of the inlet.

There were bushes all about it, except for a little space in front. A mountain-ash at one

end towered above it, and tossed high in the air its bunches of reddening berries. In my memory of that guilty hour, the smell of the mountain-ash is stronger than the picture of the dark cabin, the dull sky, and, to the northward, the gray, uneasy lake, restless even in that heavy, storm-breeding calm.

I stole cautiously down into the little clearing, and viewed my field of exploration. Smoke rose from the chimney; a smell of broth on the fire overcame the rank, raw smell of the ash-berries. I was too deeply steeped in crime to attempt to resist an irrational impulse which came over me, and I walked up to the door and knocked loudly. Then I stood there with my heart beating hard, like a repeated echo of my knock. Would he come to the door? What would he say? What should I say? Would he speak pleasantly to me? Would he talk to me of his strange history? Should we stray into delightful confidences? Could I trust him with certain speculations which I had long nursed concerning the treasures of Captain Kidd? What was before me—the magic vista of romance, or the bitter ignominy of a snub?

The door opened, and the tall figure of Squire Five-Fathom leaned over me. Between his legs I saw the fire on the cabin

hearth. All else was a smoky darkness. He looked down at me, and his great dark eyes stared, startled, questioning, out of their deep sockets. My hand was in all human probability the first that had knocked at his door in a quarter of a century. Even the tax-collector left him alone.

"What do you want, *little boy?*" he asked, in a voice that seemed to come from the ground underneath him.

Inwardly I was something dashed, but the spirit of my impulse was not to be overcome.

"I have come to call," I said, and I said it firmly.

His eyes, still troubled with the wonder of lonely old age at any unusual thing, looked me all over. Slowly he seemed to comprehend that I was but a natural, mortal boy. His voice had lost its startled tone of depth and had come back to the quaver of old age when he spoke again, asking my name. I gave it, and he repeated it in an accent of recognition mixed with reserve, which I noted at the time without understanding it at all. But I have not forgotten that delicate inflection, and I know now that my grandfather and his father were warm friends, and that their sons knew each other only by name.

However, if Squire Five-Fathom remem-

bered anything of this sort, he checked his memory suddenly, for he drew back with a courteous bow, invited me to enter, and asked me to be seated with a grace so fine and stately that before I had put myself on a low old-fashioned chair I had forgotten that I had ever been addressed as a "little boy."

While I talked with the Squire I looked furtively around the cabin. I saw first the great fireplace of logs and flat stones, where was a crane from which a pot hung simmering over a light wood fire. Then my eyes rose above the high mantel-shelf, and saw the old flint-lock shot-gun that had been Myndert Gerrit's, hanging on its hooks. Then, bit by bit, out of the dull gloom of the place, I picked the strange appointments of the last home of the Gerrits. Odd bits of make-shift fishing-tackle were all about ; some nets hung on the wall over a mahogany sideboard with great claw-feet, on the top of which stood a brush and comb and a poor little square of looking-glass. Opposite these things a pair of oars, wound with twine to cover many breaks, leaned against a lady's work-stand, with its faded green silk bag all in shreds and tatters.

Two miniatures, rimmed with thin bands of gold, hung over the Squire's bed, which was a hospital cot. The white spread was clean,

but there were holes in it, and the edges were frayed. On this bed the Squire sat down, by the side of a heap of old clothes. We looked shyly at each other for nearly a minute before we began a formal and elegant conversation.

"It was very kind of you to call—very kind indeed," said the Squire; "but unexpected—quite unexpected."

"Yes, sir," I replied, in all sincerity; "it was very unexpected indeed. I only made up my mind when I heard the clock strike three."

The Squire looked puzzled.

"Do you—do you make many calls?" he inquired.

"No, sir," I replied. Then, after reflection and self-examination, I added: "I think this is the first one I ever made."

The Squire somehow brightened up at this.

"I make very few calls myself," he said; "ve-ry few. In fact," he continued, in a burst of confidence like my own, "I don't think I've made a call in twenty-five years—twenty-five years!"

He had a habit of repeating words, by way of giving a gentle emphasis to his speech. That is a trick that rather belongs to old ladies than to old men. He had, in truth, something of

an old lady's manner of talking, with an occasional hesitancy as though he were not much in the way of using his tongue.

"It must be lonely for you, sir," I ventured.

"Lonely!" he repeated, in surprise, "why, no! Oh, dear me, not at all." Then he reflected. "Perhaps it *is*, though. I am not sure but that you are right. Yes, I suppose it *is* lonely. I had not thought of it, however."

He mused over this new idea for some moments.

"You see," he began again, "one has so much to think of—so *many* things to think of, that there is really no time to think of being lonely—aha!"—he laughed a crackling, pleased little laugh—"d'ye see? no time to think of it—aha!"

He smiled over his little ghost of a joke, and I laughed too, for I saw he expected it. That broke the ice, and we became more friendly.

"Why," he said, "there's many a night—many and many a night—when I don't get to bed before half-past eight or nine. But then, you know, I lie awake a good deal, in the course of the night—thinking, too. I suppose that's what keeps me awake. It's wonderful what a deal of thinking there is in this life."

He stopped to think over this, and I hastily

took up the conversation, lest he should give over talking altogether.

"I suppose, sir," I said, "you are a great sportsman?" and I glanced at the gun on the wall.

"Oh, no!" he returned hastily, "I was fond of my gun, at one time; but I have lost the fancy. I have so much else to do—" Here his hand wandered involuntarily to the heap of clothes by his side—then it went quickly back to his lap. (I thought he colored faintly.) He looked at me and then at the clothes in irresolute hesitation, and at last said anxiously:

"Would it disturb you if I were to continue my work? It need not interrupt our conversation in the least, I assure you."

"Oh, please don't stop for *me*, sir," I cried, much shocked at the idea. (It is within the memory of the present generation that it was once held improper for little boys to disturb the occupations of their elders.)

"Thank you," he said gravely, and, lifting a faded coat from the heap, he laid it across his lap, and began sewing a worn velvet collar upon it.

"I must have it ready for Sunday," he said; "pray converse."

I stared at him and forgot my manners.

"Is it *your* coat, sir?" I asked.

"It *was* my father's coat," he replied; "but I have cut it over for myself, and it fits me very well—very well indeed."

Every child is something of a snob, and I do not think we can fairly blame the child. We must consider that he has only material standards of comparison; that a fine coat is to him clearly and naturally an object of admiration, while it may take a lifetime to learn the beauty of an ethical virtue; that, moreover, he is, by the necessity of his condition, a dependent, a pauper, who has not yet worked for his freedom and his self-respect. I felt ashamed of my hero when I saw him making over his father's old clothes for himself.

But he was unconscious of my secret condemnation, and he went on cheerfully:

"I should prefer to patronize the tailor in the town—the little tailor from Germany, I mean. He is a worthy man, and it is our duty, of course, to encourage the industries of the place. But my income, owing to circumstances which occurred very long ago—very long ago—is limited, yes; quite limited."

Whatever I may have felt in my small secret heart, I was mannerly enough to keep it to myself, and even to feign an interest in the old gentleman's confidences; for he went on to tell me with some pride of his achievements in tail-

oring, and of the almost inexhaustible stock of garments which his father had left behind him—garments, he assured me, much finer in fabric and workmanship than anything that later days could produce. The interest at last became real, in spite of myself, and although I felt that my sympathies were low and reprehensible, when the Squire (with grave apologies for the informality of the act) took off his old coat and tried on his new-old coat, I helped him with conscientious criticism on the set of the back and the fulness of the skirts.

We got to be quite easy and friendly with all this, and when we heard a knock at the door I hastened to save my host the trouble of opening it.

"It's only an Indian, sir," I reported, with easy contempt.

This may sound like a startling announcement; but it was no painted brave who stood before me. It was only a very old Reservation Indian, hideous and wrinkled. Yet he was no darker, no more coarse of hair, and but little dirtier than any one of the French Canadians who lived on the outskirts of the town. I knew him for an Indian only by his high cheek-bones and his tall hat. I regarded him with scornful disgust; but it was only because I conceived that to be the feeling which an American boy

ought to bear toward a colored person who could not speak English, and who lived by selling baskets and feather fans and bunches of Seneca grass.

"It's Abe," said the Squire. "Come in, Abe."

Abe came in, thrust an empty basket into the Squire's hand, and stood still and silent regarding me. One of his eyes was wholly blinded by a cataract; the other, as if it were uncomfortably conscious of having to do double duty, rolled about in a grewsome way. With this eye Abe examined me, and there was no friendship in his look.

The Squire took the basket and put into it some packages which he took from a corner cupboard, talking all the while in a tone of cheery affability, of which I thoroughly disapproved. The Indian responded only by half-audible grunts, which might have meant either Yes or No.

"Ah, Abe," said the old gentleman; "and how is Abe to-night? How is the back, Abe? Did you have any difficulty in finding your way? It's getting dark." (I had noted this as I opened the door, and I had a twinge of conscience.) "Here's the bacon, Abe, and the beans, and the tea; but I can't let you have more than a quarter of a pound—you'll have to put catnip with

it. And you have a little sugar left, have you not?—ah, yes, a little sugar left. Well, that will have to do for the present, till better times come, Abe.”

Then, with a kindly pat on the back, Abe was dismissed; but on the threshold he paused and turned to say:

“Um biddle new house this side town.”

“Yes, yes, Abe,” said the Squire, with a smile on his lips and a sad look in his eyes, “it’ll come, it’ll come. They will recognize our advantages some day, never fear.”

And Abe vanished into the stormy twilight that was fast settling down.

“Abe was my body-servant when I was—when I was a young man,” said the Squire. “He taught me to shoot—yes, to ride and to swim. We were great friends, Abe and I. And now he is old and half blind, I—I—we help each other along—yes, help each other along.”

I had taken my hat to go, but the Squire did not notice me. He had gone to the fire, where he lifted the lid of the pot to glance at its contents. Then he sat down on the low chair I had just quitted, and talked, half to me, half to himself. At first he recalled the days of his hunting and fishing with Abe, and lingered over their common scrapes and adven-

tures. Then he began to speak of his father—in a lower tone, almost reverential in its fondness—and at last he began the story of the wreck of the old man's great ambition. I stood with my hat in my hand, ready to take my leave; but I could no more have gone home than if I had stood on Robinson Crusoe's island, and looked over his shoulder at the footprint on the sand. I heard the pattering of the first rain-drops on the one window of the cabin, and the growling of the distant thunder; I heard the full rush of the summer storm break upon us, and the rain pouring gusty torrents upon the roof; but I stayed and listened and forgot all things, for my excited spirit was back in Myndert Gerrit's world, in Myndert Gerrit's generation.

* * * * *

"But it will all come back some day," he said, as he made an end of the story; "some day Congress will recognize the vast importance of this location, and build the pier we have asked for. And then it will be only a question of time—only a question of time—till they enclose the whole harbor. And then—and *then*—which is the better site—I ask you on your honor, sir, on your honor as a gentleman, which is the better—this, or *that*?"

He stretched out his long right arm and

pointed to the new town, with an infinite contempt on his fine old face. His eyes glowed; his voice had grown deep and hollow and firm once more.

"Some day we shall get the appropriation——"

"But we've got it now," I broke in, speaking for the first time.

"What—what do you mean, sir?"

"We got the appropriation yesterday. I heard father say so last night—I mean, Mr. Tappan told father."

He caught at the sleeve of my coat with his bony fingers.

"What do you say, sir? Say it again, sir!"

"I heard Mr. Tappan tell father that we got the appropriation yesterday—yes, and he said something about three hundred thousand dollars, too," I asserted with vigor.

"Tappan," he said; "they ought to know. You aren't mistaken? Say it again!"

His voice had now grown tremulous. He was standing erect, trembling with an excitement that frightened me. As well as I could, I repeated the brief conversation between the mayor of the town and my father. He heard me through, I thought, though his eyes glared straight ahead, as though he heard some distant sound. Then, when I ceased, he turned

away from me and fell on his knees by the side of the bed, burying his face in his faded coat.

* * * * *

He knelt there so long that I was frightened, and after awhile I touched him gently on the shoulder. He arose with a start, and I saw that he hardly knew where he was. Then his look fell upon me, and an expression of compunction came over his face.

"My poor boy," he said, "I have been shamefully careless—shamefully careless. You should have been at home long ago. How have I treated the messenger of good tidings!" He smiled again, and this time not only with his lips. There was a light in his eyes that almost made me think him young.

"You cannot go home by yourself," he said; "you must let me go with you." With this he bustled about and brought from a corner a great mohair cloak with a cape to it. The cape he took off and fastened over my shoulders. Then he put on the cloak, and we set forth.

"I would ask you to stay and sup with me," he said, "but I fear your parents might be anxious: so we will postpone that pleasure—we will postpone it."

As we walked along, he held my hand, and occasionally patted it gently. He kept his

face lifted somewhat toward the sky, although the rain beat on it. I thought it must be unpleasant for him; but when he glanced down at me I saw that he was smiling.

We came soon to the dark lane, and here he gently insisted upon carrying me. I made some protest; but he lifted me up, and I felt the muscles of his arm like a bar of iron under my thighs. His tall figure swayed a trifle; but he set a firm foot upon the slippery ground under the trees, and in a little while we were in the high-road. I got down then, and we walked together to my father's door. My heart was beating hard—harder than when I set out.

I am afraid it would have gone hard with me, for it was past six, and the maid was discharged, and my mother wellnigh in hysterics, and my father just setting out with a lantern to call the neighbors, when we arrived. But the Squire took so much blame upon himself, and pleaded for me with such courtly and gentle grace, that my parents contented themselves with harrowing my feelings, which were sore enough already, and so, when my mother and I had wept enough, I was forgiven, and the Squire went back down the dark highway. He would not be persuaded to stay to supper. "His own was waiting," he said. Perhaps he

found in his thoughts better company than we could offer him.

That evening I told my tale, and it excited interest enough to satisfy even a boy. When I came to the part about the tailoring, my mother drew in her breath as though she were in pain.

"Oh," she cried, "I wish we could do something for him; but I suppose——"

My father shook his head.

"We could only wound him."

The comments of my parents on the whole story cleared my infant mind of one set of snobbish ideas, and I perceived that even old coats and Indians were entitled to respectful consideration from a white American boy who was still walking around in the clothes his parents had bought for him.

Nor was it long before Abe and I were friends. This friendship came as a corollary to my greater friendship for his patron. I was allowed to visit the Squire at all proper times and seasons, and there grew up between us a strong attachment. This association was of infinite value to me, and I humbly trust that it brought some pleasure into the dear old gentleman's life. It certainly drew him somewhat nearer to his fellow-men. On dark evenings he would walk home with me, and stay to

chat with my father for a half-hour. Never could he be prevailed upon to share our evening meal, save on a formal invitation delivered the day before. Then he would come in his best black satin stock and his favorite coat, and would hand my mother into the dining-room with pomp and circumstance.

On one of these occasions we had a Distinguished Guest, a Travelled Celebrity at the house, who fell in love with the Squire's sweet and simple courtliness. "Madam," said the Celebrity to my mother, after Mr. Gerrit was gone, "I need no inducement to avail myself of the chance of accepting *your* hospitality; but were I invited to meet that gentleman who has just left, in the hovel of a Pawnee Indian, I would come, if I had to come from the Cape of Good Hope." This praise of my idol so filled my boyish heart that I lay awake half the night thinking of it.

As the years went on, the Squire and Abe took me into their united lives, and we formed a triple alliance. Poor Abe's part in this was but small. He lived on the Squire's slender bounty, and the only "help" he could give in return was a lively sympathy with his benefactor's ambition. Of this he knew more than I had thought possible. As I grew older, and acquired an intelligent comprehension of the

hope that was the old Squire's life, I found that Abe had concentrated all the mental powers he possessed on that one subject.

When I was fourteen, the great pier was nearing completion. It ran northeastward from Far Point, and was to be supplemented by a similar structure extending due north from the eastward end of the town. From the mouth of the inlet we watched its daily growth, expectant of an end unforeseen by the builders.

It was the first warm day in June, and the three of us sat on the shore. Abe, with his head cocked on one side, so as to bring his work within the range of his good eye, was making a fleet of toy ships out of the chips washed to our beach from the distant lumberyard. We watched him intently.

He launched eleven ships, and was setting the twelfth in the water when, of a sudden, he turned his one eye toward the lake, and with his trembling thin brown fingers pointed to a stake set amid heavy stones a hundred feet from the shore. There the first ship of his fleet danced in the breeze—danced out to the stake—beyond it—into how many feet of smooth water I know not; for it had not gone two yards before the Squire was laughing and crying at once, I was shouting with all the

strength of my lungs, and even the old Indian had raised his stiff arms above his head, and stood swaying them from side to side, thanking his Indian god after his Indian fashion.

The great pier on Far Point had crawled out till it stemmed the current and turned it off from the shore. With every stone that should be laid, with every day's work, that terrible stream would be forced further and further out—further and further away from our level shore. Our day had come.

The engineers had builded better than they knew. The old Gerrit site had been such a thing of tradition, such a futile memory of the past, that it had been left out of the townspeople's calculations, and no one, save the Squire, had considered that the removal of the current from its low shore must bring it once more into usefulness. But Gerrit's site spoke for itself. The pier crawled out fifty feet farther that summer, and the water in the inlet began to sink. No longer fed by the resistless current, it fell away in scattered pools. In September I walked dry-shod where I had waded ankle-deep in June.

"Our time has come," the Squire said, his face beaming; "we'll buy the old house back, and when you come to pass the night with me, my boy, remember that your room is the little

one over the front entry—you won't forget—eh?—you won't forget?"

It was true enough. Something that looked like fortune lay close ahead. The ship-captains brought the news of the shifted channel; the towns-folk came out to look at "the flats a-dryin' up;" hard-featured men of business discussed the ways and means of draining and filling in. By September there was no talk of building the second pier between the Squire's land and Gerrit's Gate: it was to go westward from the extremity of Near Point, and there was to be a Gerrit's Gate in very deed between the two breakwaters, wherethrough Prosperity should come from the North, scattering plenty from full hands.

Of course the lands should have been sold for taxes, over and over again; the Squire had but the simplest notions of business, and altogether he would have reaped little good of his fortune had not my father and a few of the older residents made a friendly league to protect him. He was deeply grateful to them, although he had not the slightest comprehension of what they did for him. They secured his property to him, and he sold his first lot in October, and marked it off on his father's map. He would recognize no later survey.

He sold one or two more lots, and then the

sale stopped. Nobody was willing to invest money where it could only lie idle until the completion of the harbor-works gave the new port a positive value. This grieved the old gentleman's soul. He had begun to look upon his father's old house as his own ; it seemed a hardship to be kept out of it another year just for the want of a few beggarly thousands of ready money. That was all that he needed. The present owner was ready and willing to sell. He was a prosperous Westerner, who had brought an ailing wife to Gerrit's Gate in the hope that the strong lake winds might strengthen her. They had, however, availed only to keep her within doors and make her fretful. Mr. Garbutt, for himself, was disgusted with the whole town. He despised its petty hopes, he laughed at its modest future ; he called it old-fashioned and behind-the-times, and he openly expressed his desire to sell out at cost and go to some region where, as he expressed it, things was alive.

Fifteen thousand dollars would buy the whole Point, and the Squire made several attempts to get this money at a ruinous sacrifice. The friends who had saved him before stepped in and drove off the sharpers who would have taken advantage of him, and for the first time I saw the old man bitterly and

unjustly angry. He was kept out of his house, he cried—why were they keeping him out of his house?

By November the Squire had become so fretful and unreasonable that his friends decided upon raising the money for him at their own risk. This took some time. Money was not plentiful in the town, and it was hard to negotiate a loan that must wait a year or eighteen months for its interest and arrears of interest. During the week required for this piece of financiering, I was deputed to keep an eye on my old friend, and I passed most of my time, out of school-hours, in the little cabin which the Squire had declared he would not quit until he took possession of his father's house.

The last day of my watch I went to the post of duty with a heart less light than usual. For two days the old gentleman had been silent, dull, and depressed. I wished the financiers would hurry up, and let the Squire and me be happy and cheerful once more.

I was surprised to find the Squire cheerful, even gay. His depression had vanished. Had I been a little older I might have suspected the feverish excitement that had taken its place; being only a boy, I accepted it gratefully, and we set about cooking our supper.

We had royal suppers nowadays. There was a hot, peppery fish-chowder that the Squire alone could make, a great slice of smoked eel broiled to a rich golden brown, and baked potatoes the best in the world—baked in the ashes. And new cider to wash it all down!

But though all was good, and I ate as a healthy boy should eat, the Squire hardly touched his food, and seemed to be in haste to make an end of the meal. When it was done, he changed his every-day coat for his best—the same old best coat—and took down his great cloak from its hook.

“Come, my boy,” he said excitedly; “come with me! I’ve triumphed at last—at last—at last!”

“What do you mean, sir?” I asked.

“I’ve got the money,” he shouted, almost like a madman. “They’ll keep me out of my own house no longer. I’ve got the money. I sold the water-front to-day, my boy, and I’ve got the money, here, here, here!” and he slapped his breast-pocket with his trembling old hand.

“Sold the water-front?” I cried. “Oh, sir——”

“Never mind, never mind,” he said, frowning; “there’s more—there are acres and acres

And what do I care for it all? I'll have my father's house this night—this night. You hear me, sir!"

I loved him well, but I was only a boy, and I had neither the wit nor the strength to combat his resolution. I felt that my father should be sent for, but I knew that I could not find him in time to be of service. The Squire was determined to go to Mr. Garbutt that night and buy the house. I spoke of necessary papers, but he would have none of them. What did he care for papers? Let the lawyers see to the papers in their own good time. That was their work. He would pay his money, and own his house. He could not sleep in it; but he would sleep owning it.

The northwest gale was a tempest when we started up the hill. It was hard work to fight our way across its path; and the booming of the great waves far off at the end of the Point frightened me, long as I had known that dreary sound.

When the great door of the house opened for us, and we stepped into the broad entrance hall, we were breathing hard—I from exhaustion; he, I verily believe, from sheer excitement. He looked about him with a wild, uncertain stare. Perhaps, for the moment, he thought it was a dream. Then he grasped my

hand firmly, and stalked ahead of the servant into the drawing-room, a vast apartment where Mr. Garbutt sat in his velvet smoking-jacket, grand and lonely.

In Mr. Garbutt I found a friend. He was short, he was fat, he was vulgar in every stitch of his clothing; but he had brains in his big bald head, and a heart sound as the diamond on his breast. The Squire stated his errand, struggling between dignity and impetuosity, and Mr. Garbutt listened, at first in astonishment, and then with a quick understanding of the situation, which he promptly conveyed to me by a quick, significant twist of one eyelid. It was not even a wink; but I knew that he understood. When the Squire ended, he rose politely.

"Set down, Mr. Gerrit," he said; "set down, sir. We folks out West do business putty lively, but we ain't got to your style of speed yet. This thing ain't to be done quite so quick."

The Squire forced himself to sit down.

"It must be done to-night, Mr. Garbutt," he began.

"It'll be done to-night," said Mr. Garbutt, reassuringly; "but it's got to be done business-like. I can't give you a deed——"

"Your word, your word, Mr. Garbutt," cried

the Squire; "your word is quite enough for me!"

"Ef I sh'd die to-night," said Mr. Garbutt, impressively, "my word ain't wuth shucks to my executors, without papers to back it. I know *them*, 'n' *you* don't. Now, you jest dror up to that little desk there, an' you write me a little sort of a letter, makin' me an offer for the prop'ty, an' I'll write a letter acceptin' your offer. Then I can stow your money away 'n' feel that all's business-like 'n' right. How's that?"

The Squire sat down at the gaudy little desk and tried to write; but his hand trembled so that what he wrote (I have the sheet now) was but a tremulous scrawl that no man could read.

Meanwhile, Mr. Garbutt was addressing me in my capacity of guardian.

"Know your pa, don't I?" he said. "You kinder look after the old man, eh? Got sorter crazy on this business, ain't he? Well, you tell your pa that I'll lock the old man's money up safe for the night, an' he can call 'n' get it when he wants to. Oughter have some one appointed to take charge of him. Heard he sold out his whole water-front to-day to them swindlin' speculators from Buffalo. Well, I'll fix him up somehow to-night, and quiet him down a bit. Can you git him home?"

Mr. Garbutt kept his promise, and he man-

aged matters with a skill at which I marvel as I look back upon it. When the Squire had finished his poor pretence of writing, the Westerner took the scrawled sheet, made an effective pretence of reading it slowly and critically, and then sat down at the desk and wrote a business-like acceptance, which he made me read after the Squire had looked at it. He examined the drafts which the Squire tendered him, and laid them away in a gorgeously be-dizened safe in the wall.

"There," he said, "that's settled. Possession in May, as per my letter. But if you don't conclude to close, Mr. Gerrit, it ain't no more than an option. Suit yourself. Anyways, we'll wet the transaction."

He rang for a servant, and had a decanter of sherry and three heavy cut-glasses set on the table. We must each take a drink, to bind the bargain, he said.

We filled our glasses and lifted them. Mr. Garbutt and I were about to drink, when we saw that the Squire held his glass poised before his lips, and that he looked expectantly toward us. I did not understand what this meant, but Mr. Garbutt did.

"Thinks he's at home," he whispered to me, with a chuckle. Then he inclined his head toward the Squire.

"Your health, Mr. Gerrit," he said; and we both drank, and the Squire after us, bowing courteously.

"I don't blame you, Mr. Gerrit," said Mr. Garbutt, lolling back in a great velvet easy-chair, "for buying this piece of prop'ty, as a matter of fancy. It's a first-rate house, an' a good bit of land, I'll say *that* for it. But, as for me, this town ain't 'live enough for me. Mrs. Garbutt, she mostly goes to bed long about eight or ha'-pas'-eight, an' I set here 'n' read Patent Office Reports till I go to sleep. If there's any society here, it ain't took the trouble to root *me* out."

Here he noticed that the Squire's glance was wandering about the room. The old man was looking at the unfamiliar furniture in a puzzled way.

"Things seem a kinder new, eh?" suggested Mr. Garbutt. "Well, I put some money into this here set. Rosewood, the hull of it. Good stuff—the best there was when I bought it. Maybe you'd like to take it off my hands? Well, no, I s'pose not. Come pretty high. *Well*, now! I hadn't thought of that. There's all your old traps up garret. Found 'em here when I come here, an' couldn't quite get a straight title to 'em with the house, so I packed up these. Plenty of room, says I—might's

well be filled's not. I didn't jest feel safe to give 'em away—don't know as anybody 'd want 'em. First-rate furn'cher, too; but mahogany—old's the hills—out 'f fashion. No sort of good to me."

"Did you say, sir," asked the Squire, with a suppressed earnestness that suggested a return of his earlier excitement, "that my father's furniture is now in the attic story? I should greatly like to see it, sir—I should greatly like to see it."

"Why, cert'nly," said Mr. Garbutt, rising, with an uneasy glance at me; "glad to have you see it if you want to; but I don't think you'll find any use for it. Putty well eaten up by this time, I guess."

It was clear that the Squire had set his mind on it, in spite of anything that his host could politely suggest, and as soon as Mr. Garbutt could procure a hand-lamp, we began the toilsome ascent of the back-stairs. Here the windows faced the north, and caught the fury of the storm. The external wall of the house fairly shivered as the recurrent blasts struck it, and the strong wind, coming in through the cracks of the windows, set our lamp flickering. I was second in our line, and, looking over my shoulder, I saw the Squire's familiar face distorted in the wavering light. Up and up we

mounted, until we crawled through a narrow hole, and a smell of dry dust and seasoned wood told us that we were in the garret.

Mr. Garbutt lifted the lamp above his head. Its light illumined but a small space in that great chamber under the roof. It fell upon the old furniture of the old house—great pieces of solid mahogany, of broad and generous lines. The cushions were moth-eaten and faded to the color of the dust that covered the polished wood. Still there was a stern dignity about their dishonored forms, almost a sentient resentment of the indignity put upon them. "First-class furniture—in its time," said Mr. Garbutt, as if he felt the need of apology.

The Squire said nothing. He walked among the flickering shadows, and looked from one thing to another with a steady gaze. Once or twice he laid his hand on some table or chair, and I thought that he had a particular reason for doing so.

After he had seen all that lay within the light of Mr. Garbutt's lamp, he came back to where we were standing, and, laying his hand on my head, gently stroked my hair. He must have stood thus full a minute, while neither Mr. Garbutt nor I spoke. Then he turned aside, and going to the west window (he walked through the darkness as one who knows his

way) he opened it and looked out. I followed him, and looked over his shoulder.

The Squire looked out upon the same view on which his father had gazed when the fortunes of the Gerrits were at their height. Only now he could see nothing of the plain of promise upon which his father had rested his eyes. All below us was hid in blackness. Looking toward the west, we could see the mad turbulence of the bay, and just beyond it a line of clear white—a line that came and went, was broad and dazzling for a second, and then narrowed into darkness. It was the sea breaking on the great pier.

As we stood there, we could hear nothing but the deafening roar of the wind as it rushed in great shuddering blasts through the window. Then, as the ear grew accustomed to the noise, we caught the tremendous undertones of the storm, and at last could distinguish the heavy fall of each successive wave upon the far-off pier.

I was gently drawing the Squire away when there came one of these falls so tremendous that it seemed as though the house shook in answer to it. We all stood still, and then came a second shock so awful that our very thoughts stood still, and we were like stunned men for the moment. When we turned our eyes to the

window, we saw the line of white for the last time; a fainter sound of falling billows reached our ears, and we saw only the confused turmoil of dark waves where the pier had been.

* * * * *

"Where is the old man?" Garbutt asked, a moment or two later; and we both listened. "Great God!" he cried, "where is he going?"

We could hear his footsteps going down the uncarpeted stairs, and we followed him as fast as we could; but he was outside before we got to the outer door at the foot.

Garbutt tried manfully to run, but he had no strength for such a race. I was strong and swift, for my age, and I ran at full speed down the winding path, and in the first flash of lightning saw the Squire far below me, rushing down the hillside, through the trees and over the rocks—taking, as I saw him, a leap that would have killed any sane man.

He was far ahead of me when I reached the level of the shore. I had lost him in the darkness; but a great wave rolled up a wall of light, and against it I saw the Squire's form, with his arms raised high above his head. He ran upon the wave; I saw him beat his arms against it as if to drive it back, and then the wave melted into the night, and when the next wave came I could not see him.

It was six o'clock in the morning when I again came to the place with the searching party. A dim sun shone from the east over the heaving waters. Against its light we saw Indian Abe coming up from the lake, along the edge of the flooded inlet, bearing on his back his master's body.

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